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Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God: Herman Bavinck's Scientific Theology for the Modern World

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Declaration

This thesis is entirely original research (1) that has been composed entirely by myself; and (2) that has been solely the result of my own work; and (3) that has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the original texts are mine. When published English translations are available, notes have been made if the translations are cited yet revised.

Ximian Xu

For

Lajie Wang (王拉洁)

my wife, my crown

Yixin Xu (徐懿歆) and **Yixuan Xu** (徐懿瑄)

the heritage and reward from YHWH

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Lay Summary

Is theology a science? If so, to what extent is it a science? If it is not a science, why is this the case? Does theology deserve a place in the contemporary secular university? How should the contemporary theologian practise theology in the university? This study explores the answers to these questions offered by the turn-of-the-century Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck.

Bavinck studies has flourished in the past decade. However, no single work has focused on Bavinck's idea of theology as the science of God, that is, the science about God and of knowing God. This study argues that the idea of scientific theology as explained in this study furnishes a hermeneutical angle from which the fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's dogmatic system can be integrated. To this end, this study highlights Bavinck's twofold view of science—the visible and the invisible. The visible science is preoccupied with the sensual-perceptible world, whereas the invisible science has the spiritual as its object investigated.

Then, it points out that Bavinck argued for theology as a science that takes God as its object, openly acknowledging and defending its basis in assumptions that this God exists and reveals Himself. As such, theology as a science is concerning God through and through. To demonstrate this, the thesis identifies a range of key aspects of Bavinck's articulation of scientific theology, which, taken together, show that scientific theology is *from* God, *by* God, and *for* God.

For Bavinck, this scientific theology is operative in the sphere of science, especially the university. He refashions the Medieval slogan "theology as the Queen of the sciences", arguing that theology should take spiritual and moral dominion in the university. While this argument might seem surprising in the twentieth-first century academy, as a largely secularised academic environment, my thesis argues that Bavinck's view remains useful in examining the work of the contemporary university theologian. Given various challenges to Christian theology in the contemporary secular university, three observations can be made from Bavinck's system. First, the university theologian needs to be humble yet courageous. Second, the theologian should remember the identity of theologian qua *theologian* and theologian qua *university academic*, and discern the priority of theological identity. Third, given the moral character of theology's Queenship, theological ethics can serve as the interdisciplinary point of contact between theology and the other sciences.

In short, reading Bavinck's system according to the hermeneutical angle of scientific theology, it will demonstrate not only that Bavinck is a unified thinker, but that he develops

the science of God in a holistic way and practises it in the sphere of science, the university *par excellence*.

Abstract

The revival of Calvinism in the nineteenth-century Netherlands entailed the neo-Calvinist movement. With Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck became a brand name of neo-Calvinism. Nonetheless, not until the first decade of the twentieth-first century was scholarly interest in Bavinck's work increasing. The conventional "two Bavincks" model used to read his work for much of the twentieth century argues that some contradictory and irreconcilable themes do exist in Bavinck's system, which makes Bavinck a self-contradictory thinker. This dualistic reading characterised most of Bavinck scholars in the second half of the twentieth century. Since James Eglinton's new reading of Bavinck's organic motif, the conventional model became untenable and scholars are seeking for a reunited Herman Bavinck. Bavinck as a holistic theologian has become the industry standard of Bavinck studies. Following the new hermeneutical criterion, several theses and numerous articles have construed various themes of the unified Bavinck's system. Like them, this study aims on the one hand to maintain "one Bavinck", on the other hand, and more importantly, to fill in a notable gap in Bavinck scholarship—that is, no single work hitherto has focused on Bavinck's idea of theology as the *wetenschap* (science) of God.

This study shall demonstrate that the idea of scientific (*wetenschappelijke*) theology could be used as the hermeneutical meta-paradigm for understanding Bavinck's system. By meta-paradigm, I mean that the idea of scientific theology as explained in this study furnishes the cardinal model that incorporates the fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's dogmatic system. To this end, I will begin with Bavinck's twofold notion of *wetenschap* (the visible and invisible science). The visible science is preoccupied with the sensual-perceptible world, whereas the invisible science has the spiritual as its object investigated. Then, I will point out that Bavinck's view of theology as the science of God encompasses three defining factors: (1) the reality of God as the object of this science; (2) a reliance on faith-based assumptions regarding God's existence and self-revelation; (3) a character that is bound up with God. Next, I will analyse Bavinck's dogmatics and construct the Trinitarian grammar of his scientific theology. This grammar consists of five rationales: (1) positive revelationalism; (2) theological organicism; (3) critically organic realism; (4) dialectical catholicity; and (5) doxological teleology. These five rationales are not discrete but rather exist in concatenation; they constitute a united Trinitarian grammar, which proves Bavinck as a Trinitarian theologian. Meanwhile, the grammar underlies the meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system from the perspective of *wetenschappelijke* theology.

The meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's theology is not restrained within the confines of dogmatics. Rather, Bavinck's scientific theology makes an attempt to engage with the other sciences. This interdisciplinary character of scientific theology is associated with Bavinck's ideas of the sovereignty of science and theological encyclopaedia, which are embodied in his understanding of the moral and spiritual dominion of theology as the Queen of the sciences. While this argument might seem surprising in the twentieth-first century academy, as a largely secularised academic environment, my thesis argues that Bavinck's view remains useful in examining the work of the contemporary university theologian. Given various challenges to Christian theology in the contemporary secular university, three observations can be made from Bavinck's system. First, the university theologian needs to be humble yet courageous. Second, the theologian should remember the identity of theologian qua theologian and theologian qua university academic, and discern the priority of theological identity. Third, given the moral character of theology's Queenship, theological ethics can serve as an interdisciplinary point of contact between theology and the other sciences.

In short, reading Bavinck's system according to the meta-paradigm of scientific theology, it will demonstrate not only that Bavinck is a unified thinker, but that he also develops the science of God in a holistic way and operates it in the sphere of science, the university *par excellence*.

Abbreviations

Herman Bavinck

CW—Bavinck, Herman. *Christelijke Wetenschap*. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1904.

CWB—Bavinck, Herman. *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing*. Tweede herziene druk. Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1913.

CWV—Bavinck, Herman. *Christian Worldview*. Translated and edited by Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

GD—Gereformeerde Dogmatiek. 4th druk. 4 delen. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1928-1930.

PR—The Philosophy of Revelation: The Stone Lectures for 1908-1909. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909.

PCDS—"The Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System." Translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman. *The Bavinck Review* 5 (2014): 90-103.

RD—Reformed Dogmatics. Translated by John Vriend. Edited by John Bolt 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008. References will be made by volume and page number.

WHG—De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid. Kampen: Zalsman, 1883.

Abraham Kuyper

EHG—Kuyper, Abraham. *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*. 3 delen. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1908-1909.

EST—Kuyper, Abraham. *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*. Translated by J. Hendrik de Vries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.

Others

TBR—The Bavinck Review

rev.—The revised version of the published English translations of original texts.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Exploring the New Perspective on Bavinck

More than seventy years ago, Emil Brunner (1889-1966) enthusiastically argued that 'outside the sphere of the German-speaking peoples, too, especially in England and in Holland, the dogmatic spirit was not destroyed by the spirit of the Enlightenment. I need only remind the reader of the dogmatic works of Forsyth, Kuyper and Bavinck.'[1] However, although his *Dogmatik* was translated into English, Brunner's point seems not to have been heard widely in the English-speaking world. In contrast to the Scottish theologian P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921) and the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) who was already well-known in the Anglophone world even in his own lifetime, their contemporary Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) seems not to draw due attention in anglophone theological academia, especially the British academia. Indeed, Bavinck gave the Stone Lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary (1908-1909), which was entitled *Philosophy of Revelation* and published in English. He also travelled to London to give a lecture on John Calvin in 1909.[2] In addition, his pedagogical work was known internationally. Nonetheless, it is certainly true that after 1921, the year Bavinck passed away, the English-speaking scholarship focused far more on Karl Barth as a dogmatician.[3] Hence, it is only in recent decades that Bavinck has received renewed attention.

In the past two decades, Bavinck studies has flourished and relevant literature (both the primary and the secondary) has proliferated in the Anglophone world. After the publication of the first volume of his magnum opus *Reformed Dogmatics* in 2003, numerous books and articles by Bavinck have been translated and published, which have presented his dogmatics, theological ethics, public theology, pedagogy, interdisciplinary studies between theology and other sciences, and so forth, to a wider international audience. Against that backdrop, scholars have become more interested in this turn-of-the-century Dutch thinker, who was reared on conservative and pietistic Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) theology yet received his theological education at the University of Leiden, the bastion of Dutch liberalism at the time; who painstakingly safeguarded the due place of theology in the academy and was faithfully

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[1] Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics Vol. I: The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), 92-93.

[2] Herman Bavinck, *Johannes Calvijn: Eene lezing ter gelegenheid van den vierhonderdsten gedenkdag zijner geboorte. 10 Juli 1509-1909* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1909); Herman Bavinck, "John Calvin: A Lecture on the Occasion of his 400th Birthday, July 10, 1509-1909," trans. John Bolt, *TBR* 1 (2010): 57-85.

[3] What happened at Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1920s and 1930s could be used as an account for the enchantment with Barth's theology and the consequent conflict with neo-Calvinism in the first half of twentieth century. See George Harinck, "'How Can an Elephant Understand a Whale and Vice Versa?': The Dutch Origins of Cornelius Van Til's Appraisal of Karl Barth," in *Karl Barth and American Evangelicalism*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Clifford B. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 13-41.

committed to his church; who was immersed in the history of the Reformed tradition yet sought to articulate a distinctively modern Reformed theology.

In tandem with the increasing availability of primary literature, secondary scholarship on Bavinck has also increased considerably. Although several short English-language accounts of Bavinck's life have been published, Ron Gleason's *Herman Bavinck* (2010) is the first English biography that sketches Bavinck's life in detail by tracing out Bavinck's fourfold identity as pastor, churchman, statesman and theologian.[4] Having critiqued Gleason's work as hagiographical and as neglecting Bavinck's crisis of faith in Leiden period, James Eglinton has more recently provided a new critical biography of Herman Bavinck.[5] By virtue of the accessibility of Bavinck's English-language biographies, I will not set forth the narrative of Bavinck's life in detail. Nonetheless, the historical contexts described in the following chapters will reflect some information of his life.

The rise of Bavinck studies can also be evidenced by the founding of the Bavinck Institute at Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, Michigan) in 2009. The Institute draws a great deal of scholarly attention around the world, which is proved by the international membership of its Bavinck Society.[6] Moreover, the online journal *The Bavinck Review* published by the Bavinck Institute is 'devoted to scholarship in the theology of Herman Bavinck and the Bavinck tradition.'[7] A large number of articles—including some translations of Bavinck's writings—have been published in this journal in the past decade.

The thriving academic activities and publications on Bavinck raise the question of whether one should recognise Bavinck studies as an important development in the twentieth-century theological academia. This entails several consequent questions. How should we read Bavinck's work and theology? Is there any meta-language that can serve for the meta-paradigm, which describes and qualifies Bavinck's theology or dogmatics as a whole? Is Bavinck's theology relevant today? Can we make an effective use of his theology, as constructed more than one hundred years ago, in the twenty-first century? As will be seen, this study attempts to seek answers by focusing on Bavinck's view of theology as a science (*wetenschap*).

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[4] Ron Gleason, *Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2010). On short biography, see Henry Elias Dosker, "Herman Bavinck," *Princeton Theological Review* 20, no. 3 (1922): 448-464; Eric D. Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 9-27.

[5] James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020); James Eglinton, review of *Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian*. By Ron Gleason, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 127-128. I wish to thank Dr Eglinton for sharing with me the advanced e-copy of his new biography of Bavinck.

[6] Cf. John Bolt, "Why a Bavinck Institute? Why at Calvin Seminary," *TBR* 8 (2017): 13.

[7] John Bolt, "Introducing *The Bavinck Review*," *TBR* 1 (2010): 2.

I. The Conventional Reading of Bavinck's Theology

The answers to the questions above depend upon the interpretative paradigm that one employs to read Bavinck's work. As such, we cannot refrain from engaging with the hermeneutical history of the reception of Bavinck's thought.

The traditionally normative reading, relied on throughout the second half of the twentieth century, posited "two Bavincks" in order to describe seemingly orthodox and modern traits in his thought. James Eglinton has described this dualistic model as follows: '[Bavinck] is seemingly a Jekyll and Hyde theologian who vacillates between moments of "orthodoxy" and "modernity" without ever resolving his own basic crisis of theological identity.'[8] Accordingly, Bavinck is not a holistically integrated theologian; "two Bavincks" represents two conflicting lines of theological thinking. The import of that reading was that Bavinck's readers needed to be attentive to the two differing lines and follow either of them (on the grounds that it was not possible for Bavinck to be both modern and orthodox).

That paradigm first emerged some decades ago. As early as 1961, R. H. Bremmer has pointed out that Bavinck's theology somewhat compromised to new scientific discoveries since Bavinck wished to show an open mind to modern culture. For Bremmer, the reception of the results of modern science and historical research was the cause of the gulf between historic Christian orthodoxy and modern liberalism.[9] Granted, Bremmer did not directly use dualistic terms. Nevertheless, his assertion was more or less reflective of the dualistic approach to Bavinck's thought. This stance was taken and strengthened by Cornelius Van Til in the same year. Van Til appealed to Bavinck's followers that they needed to go beyond Bavinck to be his true followers since Bavinck was under the influence of modern philosophy.[10] Implied in Van Til's appeal was his appreciation of Bavinck that Reformed orthodox thinking overwhelms the modern in Bavinck's system, though he recognised the influence of modernism on Bavinck as undeniable.

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[8] James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 28; James Eglinton, "How Many Herman Bavincks? De Gemeene Genade and the "Two Bavincks" Hypothesis," in *Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 279.

[9] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus* (Kampen: Kok, 1961), 144-146.

[10] Cornelius Van Til, "Bavinck the Theologian: A Review Article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (1961): 48-64. Van Til also observed that Bavinck's followers should avoid Bavinck's tendency to medieval scholasticism. Having taken a detailed assessment of Van Til's critique of Bavinck, Brian Mattson observes that Van Til exaggerated some points of Bavinck's theology, which led to an uncharitable reading. Brian G. Mattson, "Van Til on Bavinck: An Assessment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 70 (2008): 111-127.

Neither Bremmer nor Van Til provided a comprehensive account of a dualistic approach to Bavinck's system. By contrast, Jan Veenhof is the representative advocator of the conventional paradigm. He suggested that there were 'two poles' in Bavinck's system: one was strongly related to Reformed orthodoxy, the other was to modernism. These two poles were especially embodied in Bavinck's use of organic language and imagery. By etymological genetic study on the word "organic", Veenhof seemed to provide a universal explanation to the sense of this word. Given Bavinck's nineteenth-century climate, he asserted that Bavinck's organicism actually appropriated German idealist organic thinking, which entailed a tension throughout Bavinck's life.[11] This philosophical reading of Bavinck's organic thinking intrudes into Gleason's biography without resistance. Gleason argues that Bavinck's organic language originated in nineteenth-century philosophy.[12] Hence, in describing Bavinck in his later years, Gleason judges that, although Bavinck was still a Reformed confessor, he was no longer committed to a *solid* Reformed theology and under the sway of modern theology.[13] It is apparent that Veenhof's reading of Bavinck's system is characterised by the conflict between orthodoxy and modernism. This characteristic feature derives the inter-contradictions of Bavinck's thought, which are reflective of Bavinck's certain compromises to modern philosophy.

Veenhof's interpretation of Bavinck's system is so seminal that it has been being influential until the first decade of the twenty-first century. In his doctoral thesis (1998), for example, Syd Hielema argued that Bavinck's doctrine of God is characterised by '[a] tension between a more relationally-oriented doctrine of God and a more abstract, philosophical one,' and Bavinck is closer to the former.[14] In contrast with Hielema, for another example, David VanDrunen endorsed the dualistic paradigm from the perspective of relationship between church and culture. He contended, 'I am not convinced that Bavinck has left us with an entirely coherent portrait of Christians' basic relationship to this world and of the fundamental nature of their cultural endeavours.'[15]

It can be perceived that the conventional interpretative paradigm of Bavinck's system has variegated application. The difference between theologians who follow the conventional

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[11] Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie: De Openbarings en Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in Vergelijking met die der Ethische Theologie* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1968), 108-111.
[12] Gleason, *Herman Bavinck*, 477-478.
[13] *Ibid.*, 402-404.
[14] Syd Hielema, "Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption" (ThD dissertation, Wycliffe College, 1998), 108.
[15] David VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ Is Twofold: Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 162.

reading consists in the fact that they use the model of "two Bavincks" to deal with differing tensions in Bavinck's system, which they construe as irreconcilable. This variegated application gives rise to the questions: Are the tensions within Bavinck's theology really irreconcilable? Is there any principle that is taken or inferred from Bavinck's theology giving an explanation to and somehow to reconcile these tensions? These are the underlying questions that have motivated the search for a new reading of Bavinck's theology, which aims to search for theological principles to mitigate the tensions and integrate Bavinck's system as a united whole.

II. The New Organic Reading of Bavinck's Theology

A. Initial Explorations

The shift of the interpretative paradigm of Bavinck's theology happened in the course of scholarly debates at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Thus, during the years of the publication of the English *Reformed Dogmatics* (2003-2008), the conventional dualistic interpretation still dominated in Bavinck studies. John Bolt was the representative of such a dualistic approach during that period. Whilst illustrating Bavinck's influence in North America, Bolt laid down a principle: 'We must begin by reminding ourselves that any consideration of Herman Bavinck's influence has to start with the annoying acknowledgment that there is not just one but rather two Bavincks.'[16]

In that context, a debate between David VanDrunen and Nelson Kloosterman challenged scholars to re-consider the plausibility of the dualistic reading of Bavinck's system. As noted earlier, VanDrunen was of the opinion that Bavinck's view of the relationship between Christianity and culture was not coherent due to Bavinck's insistence somewhere on 'the synthesis of Christianity and culture'.[17] VanDrunen's estimation was largely grounded in his two-kingdom theology, arguing that Bavinck blurred the boundaries between Christianity and culture (that is, the boundaries between the civil and the spiritual kingdoms), with particular reference to the cultural significance of classical education.[18]

VanDrunen's observation had two drawbacks. First, VanDrunen seemed not to realise the historical context of Bavinck's 'Classical Education' (Klassieke opleiding) (1918), that is, the

[16] John Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam: Herman Bavinck's reception and influence in North America," *Calvin Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (2003): 264-265.
[17] VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ Is Twofold," 162.
[18] *Ibid.*, 162-163, note 76; Herman Bavinck, "Classical Education," trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 242.

end of the First World War.[19] Going through the article, one will be impressed with Bavinck's awareness of the disruptive impact of the First World War on Western nations. With the outbreak of the War, Christian nations were mutually warring, and their unity and cooperation collapsed. That being so, Bavinck stressed the pre-War unity of Christian nations, in which Western culture was deeply rooted in Christianity. In this light, by arguing for classical education as the foundation of re-uniting Christian nations, Bavinck underscored the Christian faith as the antidote to the chaos caused by the War. Hence, Bavinck concluded the article with the rhetorical question: 'How will these nations ever again become a power for mankind if they do not possess an *inner unity in Scripture* and do not draw from one communal well?'[20]

The second defect of VanDrunen's observation consisted in his incomprehension of Bavinck's contention of the unity of Christ's mediatorial work in both creation and recreation. VanDrunen maintained that Bavinck's claim led to 'two distinct works of the Son', assigning the title *Logos* to the Son as Creator and the title Christ to the Son as Recreator, which referred to the twofold kingship of the Son. Thereby, Bavinck implicitly developed a two-kingdom theology, which contradicted his synthesis of culture and Christianity.[21] It was this point that became the pivot of Nelson Kloosterman's response to VanDrunen. Rather than pitting Christianity against culture to some extent, Kloosterman contended:

> In contrast to positing a continuing duality between the Logos and the Incarnate One, Bavinck saw Jesus Christ as revealing himself progressively in human history through his unitary and mediatorial activity. Before his incarnation, the second person of the Trinity was indeed the *Logos Asarkos*, and after his incarnation he indeed remained the *Logos Ensarkos*. The profound significance of the Incarnation is precisely that Christ's work in the creation is taken up within and made serviceable to his work of redemption. This has implications for the relationship between the church and the world.[22]

Over against VanDrunen's view of the incoherence, Kloosterman traced the Christocentric foundation of the unity of Bavinck's system. Meanwhile, Kloosterman corrected John Bolt's mistaken translation of the Dutch word "*onweersprekelijke*" in G. C. Berkouwer's writing: 'Bavinck's theology contains so many irreconcilable [*onweersprekelijke*] themes in tension'. Kloosterman (correctly) suggested that "*onweersprekelijke*" should be translated "undeniable".

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[19] Herman Bavinck, "Klassieke opleiding," *Stemmen des Tijds* 7, no. 1 (1918): 46-65, 113-147.
[20] Bavinck, "Classical Education," 243; emphasis added.
[21] VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ Is Twofold," 149-150.
[22] Nelson D. Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold': Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in Thought of Herman Bavinck by David VanDrunen," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 170.

Thus, there were undeniable, not irreconcilable, tensions in Bavinck's system.[23] It should be noted that Bolt's translation was adopted by VanDrunen without hesitation to endorse the "two Bavincks" model.[24] That is to say, having rectified Bolt's translation, Kloosterman *ipso facto* undercut the hermeneutical presupposition of VanDrunen's reading of Bavinck's view of Christianity and culture.

John Bolt joined the VanDrunen-Kloosterman debate at a later stage. In so doing, he showed great scholarly integrity by admitting his own erroneous translation and Kloosterman's proper correction. [25] This means that Bolt eventually sided with Kloosterman to defend the coherence of Bavinck's thought.[26] On the matter of the debate on Christianity and culture, Bolt cited Bavinck's Trinitarian claim in *Reformed Dogmatics* to strengthen his stance: 'Certainly, all God's works *ad extra* are undivided and common to all three persons. Prominent in these works, therefore, is the oneness of God rather than the distinction of persons.'[27] For Bolt, by arguing for the unity of the work of the Triune God, the synthesis of culture and Christianity, which are respectively the fruits of God's creation and recreation, becomes tenable.[28]

Kloosterman's and Bolt's initial explorations evidence the want of a new reading. They set forth two slightly different entrance points (Christology or Trinitarianism) of articulating a new interpretive paradigm of Bavinck's theology. Nonetheless, they reached a consensus that the conventional dualistic reading was untenable.

B. Brian Mattson's Preliminary Elaboration

Although the unity of Bavinck's system was defended by Kloosterman and Bolt, their arguments did not advance a clear motif that expresses the concatenation of various parts of Bavinck's system. At around the same time, however, Brian Mattson did take a preliminary step in this direction.

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[23] *Ibid.*, 174-175. Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 265; G. C. Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden: Herinneringen en Ervaringen* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), 55.
[24] VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ Is Twofold," 162, note 75.
[25] John Bolt, "Herman Bavinck on Natural Law and Two Kingdoms: Some Further Reflections," *TBR* 4 (2013): 77. The early version of this article was posted on the Bavinck Society in 2010, "Bavinck Society Discussion #1: The VanDrunen-Kloosterman Debate on 'Natural Law' and 'Two Kingdoms' in the Theology of Herman Bavinck," accessed by 27 September 2019, https://bavinckinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Discussion_1_VanDrunen-Kloosterman_debate.pdf
[26] However, Bolt dissents from Kloosterman in that Bolt reckons the doctrine of the Trinity as the metaphysical foundation of the unity in Bavinck's system; *ibid.*, 80.
[27] *Ibid.*, 80; *RD*, 2:329-330.
[28] Bolt omits a significant assertion made by Bavinck in the paragraph immediately after the quotation: 'these arguments uncover and preserve the connectedness between nature and grace, between creation and re-creation.' *RD*, 2:330; *GD*, 2:296. This assertion enhances the Trinitarian approach to opposing VanDrunen's dualistic reading.

The task of Mattson's work is, as the title *Restored to Our Destiny* shows, to demonstrate the formative role of eschatology in Bavinck's theological anthropology.[29] His preoccupation with specific *loci* did not lead him to ignore the hermeneutical issue in reading Bavinck's theology.[30] Rather, he was clearly conscious of the fact that the unity of Bavinck's dogmatic system is the cornerstone of the interpretation of a particular doctrine of Bavinck's system. Thus, after the introductory chapter, Mattson moves on to elaborate on the metaphysical foundations of Bavinck's theology (chapter 1). In this chapter, Mattson deals with the hermeneutical issue caused by Bavinck's use of organic language.

Mattson's basic stance is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. According to him, Bavinck's view of nature and grace is unitive, holistic and organic, on the ground of Bavinck's claim that the Triune God as the Creator made the covenant with creation.[31] Following this, Mattson accounts for the notion and sources of Bavinck's "organic" language briefly. This structure indicates that, for Mattson, Bavinck's organic thinking is theological rather than, as Veenhof argues, philosophical or idealistic (i.e. that Bavinck takes it from nineteenth-century German philosophy). Indeed, having denied Veenhof's explication of the source of Bavinck's organicism, Mattson lays down the basic principle of reading Bavinck's organic thinking.

> Granted, the overall climate of the 19th century certainly provided its own situational motivations for using the terms, but it is at least possible that Kuyper and Bavinck were speaking to the critical issues of their day *out of resources internal to their own historical-theological tradition*. In fact, this hypothesis makes for a far more satisfying account.[32]

By appealing to the study on Reformed orthodoxy led by Richard Muller, Mattson sheds light on the resources internal to Bavinck's tradition as follows: 'the progressive or organic unfolding of God's purposes in history is "given" with Reformed covenant theology.'[33] With this in mind, Bavinck's theological organicism can be considered as a contextualised form of Reformed orthodox theology in the modern age.

Mattson's monograph makes a strong case for the unity of Bavinck's system. It cogently demonstrates the holism of Bavinck's theology, and thereby overthrows the dualistic approach

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[29] Brian G. Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology & the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 4-9.
[30] Mattson deals with the model of "two Bavincks", focusing on whether or not there is alleged anti-Scholastic Bavinck, *ibid.*, 9-18. Mattson draws on Richard Muller to arrive at the conclusion that '[a]ll told, then, the attempt to distance Bavinck from his own scholasticism, while assuming a concept of scholasticism that he does not share, is to do violence to the unity and integrity of his theological work' (12).
[31] Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 19-46.
[32] *Ibid.*, 49-50; emphasis added.
[33] *Ibid.*, 54.

to Bavinck studies. However, with the focus on anthropology and eschatology, Mattson's comments on the promise of organicist thought in reading Bavinck afresh are made in passing. As such, his monograph does not provide an extended, thoroughgoing treatment of Bavinck's organic thought. Such a dearth paves the way for giving a warm welcome to James Eglinton's new reading of Bavinck's organic motif.

C. The New Reading of Organic Motif

Eglinton's new reading came out at an opportune time for the development of Bavinck studies. In fact, Mattson's own work has realised that he had to leave the task of explicating Bavinck's organic motif to Eglinton, in order to focus his attention on his own task. Hence, at the end of his brief engagement with Bavinck's organic thinking, Mattson pointed us to Eglinton's 'far more robust evaluation of Veenhof's account of Bavinck's organicism.'[34]

Having taken the baton handed over from Mattson, Eglinton dedicated his monograph to the treatment of organicism as a motif in Bavinck's theology. Eglinton's cardinal hermeneutical principle is as follows: 'The Trinity *ad intra* leads to organism *ad extra*.'[35] Two notes can be made here. First, for Eglinton, Bavinck's organicism has a theological origin. Eglinton argues that Bavinck's organic motif was not taken from philosophy in the genetic sense. Rather, this motif is rooted in the Trinitarian theology of Christianity, standing in line with the theological traditions of the patristic and Reformation eras.[36] Second, any alleged disunity in Bavinck's system concerns the themes in the organism *ad extra* rather than the immanent Trinity, who is the ultimate ideal of unity. However, if those themes are construed according to the divine unity, the tensions and incongruity in Bavinck's system will be not so striking as the conventional reading claims. Eglinton's fundamental hermeneutical principle is corresponding with Bavinck's own concise description of 'organism' in *Gereformeerde Ethiek* (*Reformed Ethics*).

> The genuine, normal condition—that is, the health—of an organism consists in the following: (a) A vital principle from its centre animates, controls and regulates everything. (b) All organs, parts, or members of an organism, animated from that centre, do not isolate themselves from but cooperate with each other. … (c) With and through the one vital principle, all members together with each other work

[34] *Ibid.*, 54, note 152; James Eglinton, "Bavinck's Organic Motif: Questions Seeking Answers," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 51-71.
[35] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 68, 72, 80, 81, 151, 156, 168, 170, 179, 200, 205.
[36] *Ibid.*, 54.

> toward one *telos* and consider themselves instruments for achieving the one task of life.[37]

This condensed definition of the organic is unpacked in detail in Bavinck's *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing* (*Christian Worldview*) par excellence with four facets of organicism.

First, organicism denotes the simultaneity of unity and diversity in creation.[38] To Bavinck's mind, such a kind of simultaneity is not impossible insofar as the diversity in creation is ultimately rooted 'in the one, wise, and holy will of God Almighty.'[39] Grounded on this theocentric foundation, Bavinck contends that '[t]here are lifeless and living, inorganic and organic, inanimate and animate, unconscious and conscious, material and spiritual creations, which differ, respectively, in character but are still taken up in the oneness of the whole.'[40] Thus, Bavinck positions himself in competition against pantheistic, monistic and pluralistic views of unity and diversity. Pantheistic and monistic systems simplify 'variety to an appearance of reality', whereas the pluralistic view anchors variety in 'eternal multitude of gods or spirits.'[41] For Bavinck, the pantheism, monism and pluralism of his day fell short of the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation of unity and diversity.

Second, unity is prioritised over diversity. Bavinck argues that 'the organic view proceeds from the whole to the parts, from the unity to the multiplicity.'[42] Again, the theoretical foundation of Bavinck's sentiment here is the Triune God. The Christian monotheistic doctrine of the Trinity inevitably entails the precedence of oneness (unity) to threeness (diversity). In this light, Bavinck contends:

> Christian theology, however, allowing itself to be instructed by the Holy Scriptures, took a different and deeper view of reality, and it proclaimed, especially in the mouths of Augustine and Calvin, that *all difference and inequality among creatures had its final cause and deepest ground in the one, wise, and holy will of God Almighty*. Thus, there is indeed a unity that holds everything together, but this unity is not to be found within the world itself by erasing the differences and contrasts; it rests in the hand of *Him who as King of kings* reigns over all things.[43]

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[37] Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, ed. Dirk van Keulen (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019), 278-279; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Volume 1: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. John Bolt et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 417; rev.
[38] *CWB*, 50; *CWV*, 71; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 67-68.
[39] Herman Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," trans. Bruce R. Pass, *TBR* 7 (2016): 106-107.
[40] *CWB*, 50; *CWV*, 72.
[41] Bavinck, "On Inequality," 146.
[42] *CWB*, 51; *CWV*, 73; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 91.
[43] Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 107; emphasis added.

It is clear that, for Bavinck, the precedence of unity to diversity is conceptually internal to the Christian tradition and the Christian belief in the Triunity. It is from the Christian tradition that he draws the constituent parts of his organic thinking.

Third, 'the organism's shared life is orchestrated by a common idea' by virtue of God's wisdom that created and recreates the universe.[44] To Bavinck's mind, the vitality of an organism is contingent upon its common idea.

> Organic life cannot be explained by the laws of mechanisms. Every attempt devoted to doing so has been fruitless to this point. As soon as we come into contact with an organism, we see at work a force, a principle, a *vis vitalis* or whatever people may term it, which, rather than being explicable by physical and chemical laws, instead governs them, stands above them, not destroying and suspending them in any way, but putting them in service and directing them. That mysterious, hidden power is exactly what comprises the organic, and is the constitutive and supportive principle of the organic.[45]

Whist speaking of creation as organism, for Bavinck, the common idea is doubtless given by the Creator, the Triune God. Hence, he maintains that 'God's thoughts, spoken in his Word, in his Son, are the *causae exemplares* of things' and the foundation of the created existence.[46]

Fourth, an organism has its own definite *telos* which has been laid down by God's wisdom in creation and recreation. More importantly, although things differ in their substances and properties, they serve together for an ultimate goal.[47] In Bavinck's theology, no matter in what spheres, the ultimate *telos* is the glory of God. As he writes, '[f]rom the lowest forms of life it strives upward to where the light and life of God is, and at the same time it moves forward to a God-glorifying end.'[48]

Bavinck's concise definition in *Gereformeerde Ethiek* and detailed explication elsewhere (particularly in *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing*) together prove the theological origin of his organicism—that is, Bavinck's organic thinking is grounded in the doctrine of the Triune God. In this sense, although Veenhof accounts for the four facets of Bavinck's organicism, Veenhof and Eglinton differ in their points of departure. Whereas Eglinton recognises Bavinck's speaking from his tradition to his time, Veenhof judges that the terminologies of organicism in *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing* are clearly reflective of a philosophical bearing on Bavinck's thoughts.[49] In this light, Eglinton's Trinitarian reading of Bavinck's organic motif provides an

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[44] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 69.
[45] *PCDS*, 91.
[46] *CWB*, 57; *CWV*, 79-80
[47] *CWB*, 65-68; *CWV*, 89-91; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 69-70.
[48] *RD*, 2:436; *GD*, 2:400.
[49] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 82, 208; Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 264, 267.

alternative interpretative paradigm of Bavinck's theology. Thereafter, Bavinck scholars can confidently speak of the unity of Bavinck's system by construing his thought through the lens of the doctrine of the Trinity and then theological organicism.

III. A Promise of the New Reading

A. The Emergence of the Eglintonian School

Eglinton's new reading of Bavinck's organic motif is seminal. As John Bolt—who is a well-known Bavinck scholar and who previously held "two Bavincks" model—argues, 'Eglinton's careful research and persuasive argument casts this entire enterprise [two Bavincks] into serious doubt.'[50] It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this new reading has become the industry standard of Bavinck studies. To name one example: Having Eglinton's cardinal hermeneutical principle (the Trinity *ad intra* leads to organism *ad extra*) as the point of departure, Daniel Ragusa argues that Bavinck's apologetics is articulated on the ground of organic ontology—that is, 'the archetypal unity-in-diversity of the triune God of Scripture necessitates an ectypal unity-in-diversity in the creation.'[51]

Frequent appearances of the new reading of Bavinck's organic motif in articles prove its broad influence. The depth of the bearing of the new reading on Bavinck studies can be seen in the emergence of the Eglintonian school through three completed doctoral theses, each of which has tested and advanced its new reading.

Cory Brock's doctoral thesis is the first extended study based on the new reading since Eglinton's work. Under Eglinton's supervision, Brock explores Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's theology. The title 'Orthodoxy yet Modern' has indicated that, for Brock, there is no such an irreconcilable tension between Reformed orthodoxy and liberalism in Bavinck's system.

Brock begins his thesis by discussing Bavinck's interpreters. Having rejected the conventional dualistic interpretation, he points out the threefold significance of the new reading for his own study. First, the new reading 'provides a fundamental hermeneutical key to

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[50] John Bolt, "Following Bavinck's Lead," accessed by 28 September 2019, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/following-bavincks-lead/

[51] Daniel Ragusa, "The Trinity at the Center of Thought and Life: Herman Bavinck's Organic Apologetic," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 28 (2017): 150-151; also see Laurence O'Donnell, "'Bavinck's Bug' or 'Van Tilian' Hypochondria?: An Analysis of Prof. Oliphint's Assertion That Cognitive Realism and Reformed Theology Are Incompatible," in *For the Healing of the Nations: Essays on Creation, Redemption, and Neo-Calvinism*, ed. W. Bradford Littlejohn and Peter Escalante (Lexington: The Davenant Press, 2014), 160; Gregory W. Parker, "Reformation or Revolution? Herman Bavinck and Henri De Lubac on Nature and Grace," *Perichoresis* 15, no. 3 (2017): 82.

interpreting Bavinck's texts in tension.' Second, it prompts Bavinck scholars to re-examine 'the most salient themes in Bavinck scholarship' from the perspective of a unified Bavinck without disregarding the tensions thereof. Third, the new reading of organic motif is pertinent to Brock's research in the sense that the organic motif and 'the concept of immediate self-consciousness' (a key theme in Schleiermacher's theology) are interdependent.[52]

That being so, Brock demonstrates Bavinck's critical appreciation and appropriation of Schleiermacher's theology. He even asserts that Bavinck was 'the mouthpiece that brought Schleiermacher's conceptual framework into the context of the confessional, separatist environment.'[53] In other words, Bavinck is orthodox *yet* modern insofar as he subordinates philosophical thinking and the concepts of modern theology to Reformed orthodox and confessional traditions. 'Bavinck took some of the philosophical tendencies of post-Kantian thought, particularly Schleiermacher's central philosophical motifs (the borrowed propositions), and subsumed them under the strictures of his Reformed orthodox commitments in their theological applications.'[54] By arguing this, Brock forcibly overthrows the alleged irreconcilable tension of Reformed orthodox and modernism in Bavinck's system, and thereby furthers Eglinton's new reading of a holistic Bavinck.

Following Brock is Nathaniel Gray Sutanto's thesis, which was also supervised by Eglinton. Sutanto's work explores Bavinck's theological epistemology, which is qualified as 'Reformed-organic-realism' or 'organic epistemology.'[55] Like Brock, Sutanto grounds his work in Eglinton's new reading. Following this, he lays out the main argument in the discussion on Bavinck's organic motif: 'Bavinck's unique organicism resulted in a theologically reinterpreted synthesis of classical and modern patterns of thought, between critical realism and absolute idealism, the emphasis on the specialization of the sciences on the one hand and its underlying unity on the other.'[56] From this vantage point, Sutanto accounts for Bavinck's holistic and organic *wetenschap* (science), not only theological epistemology but also theology's relationship with the other sciences. As Sutanto argues,

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[52] Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020), 38-39; the doctoral thesis: Cory C. Brock, "Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Appropriation of Schleiermacher" (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2017). I would like to thank Dr Cory Brock for sharing the advanced soft copy of his monograph with me.
[53] Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 68-69. This critical appropriation of Schleiermacher's theology can be seen in Bavinck's joint use of Calvin and Schleiermacher on the discussion on feeling (246-247).
[54] *Ibid.*, 18.
[55] Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's the Theological Epistemology* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 145; the doctoral thesis: Nathaniel Sutanto, "Organic Knowing: The Theological Epistemology of Herman Bavinck" (PhD dissertation, The University of Edinburgh, 2017).
[56] *Ibid.*, 9.

> Bavinck respects the integrity of the independence of the sciences, and yet unites them all by the principles of Christian-theism—*wetenschap* conforms to an organic shape of unity-in-diversity such that the *principia* of theology (Scriptural revelation and the doctrinal content of faith) remain the *principia* of the other sciences in *addition* to their own individual *principia*.[57]

The third doctoral thesis, supervised by James Eglinton, is Bruce Pass's methodological study on the heart of Bavinck's dogmatics. Pass's basic contention is that Christology 'forms the trunk of Bavinck's system from which all the other dogmas branch out.'[58] Prior to pinning the central dogma down, Pass explicates Bavinck's view of dogmatics as a *wetenschappelijke* (scientific) system by virtue of the new reading of organic motif. One merit of Pass's work, which the previous two theses fall short of, is his comparative study on Bavinck's and F. W. J. Schelling's (1775-1854) organic thinking. Pass points out the similarities of Bavinck's and Schelling's (idealistic) organicism, arguing that 'Bavinck's concept of the organism thus mirrors *the formal properties* of the organism as it was developed by the first generation of post-Kantian idealists.'[59] He makes it clear that Bavinck is self-consistent in the sense that Bavinck does not oscillate between theology and philosophy (i.e. nineteenth-century German idealism).

Based on the organic system of Bavinck's scientific dogmatics, Pass's thesis is unfolded through the exegesis of the following programmatic statement:

> The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point (*uitgangspunt*), but it is indeed the centre (*middelpunt*) of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious—ethical life of Christianity. It is the μυστήριον εὐσεβείας (1 Tim 3:16). The whole of Christology has to proceed from here.[60]

The result of Pass's exegesis is the demonstration of how Christology functions as the centre and heart of Bavinck's scientific dogmatics. In this sense, Pass seems to seek for a Christological meta-language in Bavinck's system.

All the three theses exhibit the sympathy with Eglinton's new reading. On this score, they seem to establish the Eglintonian school that commits itself to delve into various themes in

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[57] *Ibid.*, 60.
[58] Bruce R. Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics': The Place and Purpose of Christology in the Theological Method of Herman Bavinck" (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2018), 5.
[59] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 20; emphasis added. The words "formal properties" are reflective of Bavinck's Reformed eclecticism, as proposed by Cory and Sutanto, which is indicative of Bavinck's theological appropriation of philosophy; Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicity, Consciousness and Theological Epistemology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70, no. 3 (2017): 310-332.
[60] *GD*, 3:254; rev.; *RD*, 3:274; Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 6.

Bavinck's system under the auspices of Eglinton's Trinitarian reading of Bavinck's organic motif.[61]

B. Scientific Theology as a Promise

In closing his celebrated monograph *Trinity and Organism*, James Eglinton qualifies his research as follows: 'In probing the consequences of a reunited view of Bavinck's thought to this one particular area, that of the organic, one has also only made the first steps in a wider movement in Bavinck studies.'[62] The statement is not merely a qualification but also an earnest appeal for a deeper study on Bavinck's system. Granted, as the three theses have achieved, this study is to respond to the appeal, and is reflective of the ethos of the Eglintonian school, with the explication of Bavinck's notion of theology as the science of God. In this sense, this study seeks to fulfil one aspect of the promise of the new reading.

Concentrating on Bavinck's conception of *wetenschappelijke* (scientific) theology, my thesis shall argue that, in developing theology as the science of God since his early career onwards, Bavinck methodologically constructs dogmatics with the singular Trinitarian grammar that has five rationales in concatenation—that is, positive revelationalism, theological organicism, organically critical realism, dialectical catholicity, and doxological teleology. This idiosyncratic grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology leads to his insistence on the place of theology in the academy (and not merely in a private seminary), which is of significance for the justification of Christian theology in the university of the twentieth-first century. Thus, the notion of *wetenschappelijke* theology could be used as the hermeneutical meta-paradigm for understanding Bavinck's system. More specifically, since Eglinton's new reading, numerous fundamental aspects of Bavinck's theology have been explored, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, Christology and the doctrine of revelation. These themes can offer some paradigms of the interpretation of Bavinck's dogmatic system. For example, organicism has developed an organist interpretative paradigm of Bavinck's thought. However, whether there is an apparatus that can handles differing paradigms remains to be explored. Such an apparatus more robustly evidences a holistic Bavinck by blending well together differing theological themes. This study seeks for the meta-paradigm, which means that the idea of scientific theology as explained in this study furnishes such an apparatus that coordinates various fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's thought in order to set forth a big picture of his dogmatic theology.

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[61] One should take note of Pass's more critical attitude to organicism than Brock and Sutanto's, as will be discussed in chapter five.
[62] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 195.

a. The Heritage of Christian Theology

Although this thesis will explore Bavinck's late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century arguments for the nature of theology as a science (and will make constructive claims about theology in the twentieth-first-century academy), it must begin with the recognition that Bavinck himself regarded "scientific theology" as having a long historical pedigree. In setting out his case for theology as a science, Bavinck positioned himself in-line with Augustine and Aquinas.

As early as Augustine, theology was depicted as something akin to science. Added to the saying "I believe in order that I understand" (*credo ut intellegam*), Augustine stressed the necessity of both *scientia* (science) and *sapientia* (wisdom).

> But all these things which the Word made flesh did and suffered for us in time and place belong, according to the distinction which we have undertaken to point out, to science [knowledge], and not to wisdom. But because the Word is without time and without place, He is co-eternal with the Father and is wholly present everywhere. And if anyone is able, insofar as he is able, to bring forward a truthful utterance about this, then that utterance will belong to wisdom; and, therefore, the Word made flesh, which is Christ Jesus, possesses the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.[63]

Although Augustine qualified *scientia* as relevant to the temporal and *sapientia* as related to the eternal, he perceived that the incarnation necessitates both science and wisdom. Nonetheless, *scientia* is the means by which human knowledge moves upward *sapientia* as the *telos*. Both the end and the means leading to that end are of importance to Augustine. In this light, Gijsbert van den Brink rightly discerns the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* yet fails to perceive their affinity. Hence, he does injustice to drawing the corollary that Augustine denies the scientific status of theology.[64]

The dominance of Aristotelian philosophy in the Medieval ages broadened the notion of *scientia*—science is a knowledge derived and demonstrated from its first principles—which incorporated theology. As a response to the claim that theology is not a science insofar as 'every science proceeds from self-evident principles', Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) asserted that 'sacred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed.'[65] In this sense, theology is a

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[63] Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, ed. Hermigild Dressler (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 13.19.24.
[64] Gijsbert Van den Brink, "How Theology Stopped Being *Regina Scientiarum*——and How Its Story Continues," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32, no. 4 (2019): 445.
[65] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1920-22), I.Q1.A2.O1, Answer.

subalternate science that is derived from a higher science. Despite the subalternate status, Aquinas argued that '[o]ther sciences are called the handmaidens of this one.'[66] Van den Brink is probably right by saying that 'the idea that during the Middle Ages theology was generally known as the queen of the sciences' was invented.[67] Indeed, Aquinas did not define theology as the Queen. Nonetheless, the hierarchical relationship between theology and the other sciences is evident.[68] Now that the other sciences are the handmaidens, theology would be the King even if it is not the Queen; in any case, theology did occupy a higher status than the other sciences.

The Reformation did not rule out the theological terminologies of the Medieval Christianity. Richard Muller points out that both *scientia* and *sapientia* were still recognised as the two most suitable forms of knowing that were applied to theology, though differing Reformed orthodox theologians would prefer one or the other. The key change consists in refashioning the term *scientia* in a Ramistic way over against Aristotelian philosophy. That is, theology as a *scientia* is not deductive in such a sense that the first principle is the basis for conclusion. Instead, theology is the *scientia* of 'living blessedly forever.' Moreover, theology as a science cannot be categorised into Aristotle's paradigm of *intelligentia*, *scientia*, *sapientia*, *prudentia* and *ars* since 'the orthodox hesitancy to equate theology precisely with any human discipline permitted their systems to remain open to forms and patterns of knowing.'[69]

The retaining the term *scientia* as one predicative of theology in the post-Reformation era proves the continuance of Aquinas's idea of theology as a subalternate science. It should be noted that, by inheriting Thomistic terms, Reformed scholastics imported into them the notions of archetypal and ectypal theology, in order to defend the stance that the first principles of the subalternate science are self-evident by virtue of the ectypal knowledge of God as the revealed archetypal divine knowledge.[70] *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, the textbook of Reformed theology composed in the first quarter of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, is an apparent instance. The first Disputation of the *Synopsis* begins with the elaboration on

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[66] *Ibid.*, I.Q1.A5.OTC.
[67] Van den Brink, "How Theology Stopped Being *Regina Scientiarum*," 444.
[68] St. Bonaventure sets forth a similar expression: 'theology is the only perfect science.' Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. José de Vinck Docteur, vol. 2, The Works of Bonaventure (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), I.1.2.
[69] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 247, 333-339.
[70] Sebastian Rehnman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 62-63.

archetypal theology (God's self-knowledge) and ectypal theology (the revealed knowledge of God). In discussing the latter, it defines theology as a science:

> And if Theology is viewed insofar as it is the knowledge [*scientia*] that God either has communicated to created beings endowed with understanding in this age, or that He will share in the age to come, it is ectypal theology. And this knowledge communicated by God has been, so to speak, reproduced from the original in various ways and degrees of communication in people living on this earth, obviously through the grace of revelation.[71]

As a Dutch Reformed theologian, Bavinck partook of the Reformed heritage of theology as a *scientia*. It is salient to note that early in his career, Bavinck edited the sixth edition of *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*.[72] In the latest Bavinck biography, Eglinton points out that Bavinck made the decisions to be a minister of the church of *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (Bavinck's denomination) in Franeker and to edit the *Synopsis* at the same time, which together served for his future theological career. To be a minister, Bavinck expected for the appointment several years later in the Theological School in Kampen, the seminary of *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Meanwhile, he turned to the *Synopsis* in order to become familiar with Reformed orthodoxy, as he had not learned enough about it in the University of Leiden. Both showed Bavinck's ambition to be 'a scientific theologian.'[73] Hence, it is not surprising to find that Bavinck leaned heavily on this aspect of his heritage in constructing his own system. As will be seen, his elaboration on scientific theology and archetypal-ectypal theology goes some way to proving this observation.

b. A Hermeneutical Meta-Paradigm and Its Threefold Promise

Given this heritage, it is surprising that no Bavinck scholar hitherto has dedicated a monograph to construing Bavinck's idea of theology as a science, namely theology as the science about God and of knowing God. Although Sutanto devotes his thesis to the exegesis of Bavinck's idea of *wetenschap*, his work focuses on epistemology rather than figuring out the extent to which the term *wetenschap* could be a meta-language that can serve for the hermeneutical meta-paradigm of Bavinck's system. As will be seen, both Sutanto's work and this study unpack Bavinck's stance on theology's relation to the other sciences. However, they differ in that this study will first of all ascertain Bavinck's view of scientific theology, from

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[71] Dolf te Velde, ed., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology, Volume 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 33. The *Synopsis* defines theology as both science and wisdom (36-39)
[72] Herman Bavinck, "Bavinck's Preface to the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*," trans. Mathilde de Vries-van Uden, *TBR* 8 (2017): 110-114.
[73] Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 112-113.

which vantage point the affinity between theology and the other sciences will be explicated. That is to say, this study insists that it is Bavinck's fundamental dogmatic methodology that determines theology's relationship with the other sciences. In contrast with Sutanto, the work of Abraham Flipse elucidates much less Bavinck's view of scientific theology. His purpose is to explore the nineteenth-century neo-Calvinist and neo-Thomistic efforts to articulate the relationship between Christianity and the natural sciences, which are reflective of their scientific ideals respectively. Hence, he engages with Bavinck briefly (leaving space for the elaboration on the whole neo-Calvinist movement) and focuses on Bavinck's view of theology's relation to the natural sciences.[74] However, much more remains to be said. For that reason, in light of the now well-established new reading of Bavinck's holistically integrated thought, the lacuna that is Bavinck's idea of scientific theology needs to be filled in; otherwise, the methodological shortage in reading Bavinck's theology will remain. Moreover, by filling in this gap, this thesis sets out to strengthen claims of a unified Bavinck, in particular regarding the holism of Bavinck's system: Immersed in his own heritage, it will be argued, Bavinck articulated a scientific theology in the modern world.

The importance of this study consists not only in the construal of the united Bavinck's system (*contra* "two Bavincks") but also in its attempt to go beyond the new reading of the organic motif. I need to clarify that going beyond does not deny, devalue or combat the new reading. On the contrary, this study is consciously undertaken as part of the Eglintonian school. Nonetheless, as Eglinton says, the new reading 'has also only made the first steps in a wider movement in Bavinck studies.'[75] This means that numerous further steps need to be taken.

My thesis aims to make one step to demonstrate *wetenschap* as the meta-language of Bavinck's system. Scientific theology or theology as a science is the referent of Bavinck's theology. In this light, *wetenschap* is used to articulate an interpretative meta-paradigm of Bavinck's theology. Thus, the significance of going beyond the new reading is found in the claim that the organic motif is subordinate to and serves for the meta-language of *wetenschap*. In other words, Bavinck loads "scientific" with a higher methodological status than "organic." As will be seen in chapter four, "organic" is a part of the grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology.

This meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck leads to three promises: the analytic, the constructive, and the relevant. These promises correspond with three questions: (1) What is

[74] Abraham C. Flipse, *Christelijke Wetenschap. Nederlandse rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden over de natuurwetenschap, 1880-1940* (Torenlaan: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2014), 97-105.
[75] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 195.

Bavinck's notion of scientific theology? (2) How does Bavinck attempt to construct scientific theology? (3) To what extent, if any, is Bavinck's scientific theology relevant in the twentieth-first century?

The *analytic* promise aims to unpack Bavinck's scientific theology (chapter 3) in view of his historical context (chapters 2). I will single out the rise of *Religiewetenschap* (the science of religion or religious science) and the movement of theological modernism as two contextual aspects to which Bavinck's scientific theology responds. Then, I move on to shed light on Bavinck's idea of theology as the science of God, that is, the science about God and of knowing God. I will set forth Bavinck's twofold notion of *wetenschap* (the visible and the invisible) and three factors of his definition of scientific theology (God as the real object, assumptions in faith, and divine object-defining). At this point, a clarification needs to be made: the Dutch terms "*wetenschap*" and "*wetenschappelijke*" will be translated "science" and "scientific" throughout my thesis.[76] Of course, these two Dutch words can also be rendered "scholarship" and "scholarly" or "academic". However, as will be pointed out in chapter 3, Bavinck himself takes issue with the restraint of the sense of *wetenschap* within the confines of natural science. *Wetenschap* has a broader connotation, as does its German cognate *Wissenschaft*. In this light, the English equivalents "science" and "scientific" are more faithful to Bavinck's thinking. In short, the analysis of chapters 2-3 makes an attempt to sketch the landscape of Bavinck's project of scientific theology.

The *constructive* promise is, first, to explore the way in which Bavinck constructs his theological system. I will put forward five rationales—positive revelationalism, theological organicism, organically critical realism (chapter 4), dialectical catholicity, doxological teleology (chapter 5)—that constitute the single Trinitarian grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology. It should be acknowledged that Bavinck himself did not comes up with these five rationales or labels them as the rationales of scientific theology in his work. Thus, the second aspect of the constructive promise consists in my construction of the Trinitarian grammar of Bavinck's system. By doing so, my intention is to propose a hermeneutical meta-paradigm of Bavinck's theology. Nonetheless, I do not mean that the five rationales have already exhausted the Trinitarian grammar, though I believe these rationales have ranged over most if not all that is quintessential to his Trinitarian grammar. This gives birth to the third aspect of the

[76] Eglinton also chooses "science" as the proper English equivalent of the Dutch *wetenschap*; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, xix-x.

constructive promise—that is, more scholarly attention can be drawn to illustrate Bavinck's idea of scientific theology.

The *relevant* promise concerns the Bavinckian practice of scientific theology in the contemporary university. As chapter 2 will show, Bavinck wrestled with the debate on the due place of theology in the academy from the outset of his career. Hence, I will first of all unfold Bavinck's stance on theology's relation to the other sciences in the academy in view of his immediate milieu (chapter 6). Unlike Sutanto's epistemologically-focused demonstration, my argument shall begin with the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates on whether theology should be practised in the Free University in Amsterdam or the Theological School in Kampen, concentrating on their opposing views of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia. I will point out that Bavinck adopts a Christological approach (resembling Gregory Nazianzus's slogan "the Unassumed is the unhealed") to dealing with this debate, arguing for theology's due place in the university without separation from the *institutional church*. This basic principle underlies Bavinck's formulation of the Medieval idea "Theology as the *Regina Scientiarum*"––which is to say, theology's Queenship is primarily spiritual and moral.

Chapter 7 explores whether a Bavinckian approach to the practice of scientific theology can be developed in the university of the twentieth-first century. The history of Western universities seems to chart the decline of theology's status as Queen. The question of how theological studies should be practised in the university of this century continues to draw a great deal of scholarly (and popular) attention. As a turn-of-the-century thinker, Bavinck's scientific theology is not outdated. It gives us threefold promise at least: (1) The theologian needs to be humble yet to be courageous; (2) the identity of theologian has the ontological priority over that of university academic; (3) theological ethics can function as the point of contact between theology and the other sciences. With these three principles, Bavinck reminds the contemporary university theologian that they are not only the human agent qua *academics* who are conceived of as value-free or just producing scholarly work, but also, more importantly, the human agent qua *theologian* who should be the confessor of the Triune God and faithful to the object of scientific theology and play the role of leaven in the academy.

Now, we turn to the narrative of Bavinck's own historical contexts. Therein, one will see the challenging circumstances faced by the Reformed orthodox theology in the nineteenth-century Netherlands. These hindrances make up the backdrop of Bavinck's articulation of theology with the meta-language of *wetenschap*.

Chapter 2 Against the Stream: Bavinck's Refusal of the Unscientific Portrayals of Scientific Theology in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands

I. Introduction

Born in 1854 and undertaking theological studies in the University of Leiden in the 1870s, Herman Bavinck engaged with the theological and historical legacies of the first half of the nineteenth century on the one hand, and on the other hand wrestled with various crises and challenges to the Christian faith thereafter. Numerous contextual aspects need be taken into consideration in order to grasp how Bavinck understood "scientific theology" in that particular historical milieu. Amongst them, two contextual factors are of particular importance: (1) the emergence of the "science of religion" or "religious science" (*religiewetenschap*)[1] in the nineteenth-century Dutch academy, and (2) the movement of theological modernism.

It should be noted that by exploring these two factors, no attempt is taken to absolutise their influences on Bavinck. Over against historicism, Bavinck's scientific theology was not shaped by these contexts essentially and ultimately. Since the beginning of his theological career, Bavinck has already been aware that innate to the Christian faith, the Reformed faith *par excellence*, is scientificity.[2] Hence, by inheriting Reformed legacies of theology as *scientia*, Bavinck's scientific theology was, in some sense, contextually articulated to stand against his contemporary stream, particularly the science of religion and theological modernism. It is worth noting that other historical events shall be considered as well, such as the revolution of higher education in the nineteenth century, the Union of the Reformed Churches (which saw Bavinck's denomination merge with the *Doleantie* church led by Abraham Kuyper) to produce the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (1892) and the relationship between Theological School in Kampen and the Theological Faculty of the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*. These factors will be explored at pertinent places in the chapters that follow.

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[1] Arie Molendijk points out that the use of the term "science of religion" '[depends] on whether it is seen as a special discipline or as a comprehensive designation for every kind of scholarly study of religion'; see Arie L. Molendijk, "Introduction," in *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion*, ed. Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15. Here, the term "science of religion" will be used inclusively to describe the scholarly study of religion emerged in the nineteenth-century Netherlands. Some other terms are also used, such as "history of religion", "religious studies" and "comparative studies of religion".

[2] Eglinton observes that the concern for scientific theology was a standard part of Bavinck's heritage as a child of the seceder Church; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 34-37; 61-62.

II. *Religiewetenschap* in the Nineteenth-Century Dutch Academy

A. The Nineteenth-Century Dutch Religious Science

The emergence of *Religiewetenschap* in the nineteenth-century Netherlands was seminal for the continuing development of this discipline around the world.[3] In the Netherlands, religious science has already been institutionalised as early as the 1870s by the Higher Education Act (1876). In that decade, Bavinck undertook theological studies in the University of Leiden, which was the centre of the Dutch modern theology at the time. The theological modernism in the Netherlands was not just generic "modern theology", referring to the post-Enlightenment liberal Protestantism. Moreover, as will be seen below, it was specific to Leiden.[4] This Act was intended to replace the faculty of theology with the faculty of religious science in Dutch universities, albeit whilst retaining the subject name 'Theology' (*Godgeleerdheid*). Despite the Act's intention, the education provided by Dutch theological faculties was a mixture of classical theology and religious studies. Not all of Leiden's theologians conformed to the Act. For that reason, the science of religion began to clash with theology on the level of university education officially and publicly.

It can be argued that the emergence and flourishing of religious science in the nineteenth-century Netherlands was grounded in the Enlightenment. Rather than transforming religion to be rational, Els Stronks observes, '[t]he Protestant Dutch enlightenment was a moderate movement, in which religion and reason were carefully balanced and connected … all potentially controversial theological issues were avoided.'[5] This moderate hallmark paved the way for the striving for religious toleration in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although the Dutch Republic held a religious policy of 'ambivalent semi-tolerance', as Jonathan Israel argues, a great extent of religious toleration could be discerned in those years.[6] This moderate attitude toward religion continued to be present in Dutch culture, particularly expressed in its critical reception of the French Revolution.[7] Notwithstanding that the separation of the Church and the State in the Netherlands was largely influenced by the

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[3] On the reputation of the early Dutch science of religion, see Arie L. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 23-47.
[4] A helpful analysis of Dutch modern theology, see Eldred C. Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924).
[5] Els Stronks, *Negotiating Differences: Word, Image and Religion in the Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 297.
[6] Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic : Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477- 1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 674-676.
[7] On neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution, see James Eglinton and George Harinck, eds., *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Revolution, the Revolution's hostility toward religion was refused because of the Anti-Revolutionary movement led by Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), the godfather of both Bavinck and Kuyper.[8] The pursuit of pluralism in a society, which featured in the Revolution, stimulated the exploration of the other religions than Christianity. In other words, the Revolution matured the Dutch Enlightenment's religious toleration and then set the scene for the flourishing of religious science in Dutch universities. What is more, the science of religion was reinforced by the development of interdisciplinary dialogue in the nineteenth-century Netherlands. 'Boundaries between disciplines were not yet established, and the scholars involved in the study of religion did communicate with each other.'[9]

B. Cornelis Petrus Tiele on Religious Science

In the period of the institutionalisation of religious science, the Netherlands had several leading scholars in this field, including the likes of Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902), P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848-1920) and Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891). Amongst the Dutch scholars of religious science in the nineteenth century, Tiele was the most eminent. He was born on 16 December 1830 and educated in the *Athenaeum Illustre* and the Seminary of the Remonstrant Church in Amsterdam. After that, he became a minister of the Remonstrant Brotherhood. In 1877, Tiele obtained a full professorship at the University of Leiden, occupying the first Dutch chair in history of religion until 1900. He is considered as the founding father of religious science in the Netherlands.[10] Given this, Tiele's view of religious

[8] Van Prinsterer perceived that the French Revolution had not been over at his time and its essence was none other than 'the hatred of the Gospel' and Christian faith; further, he asserted that '[t]he same principle of unbelief operated in philosophy proper, in the various branches of learning, and even in literature'; Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer, *Unbelief and Revolution*, ed. and trans. Harry Van Dyke (Bellingham: Lexham, 2018), 94-95. Bavinck certainly grasped the core of van Prinsterer's critique of the French Revolution; Herman Bavinck, "Herman Bavinck's Foreword to *Unbelief and Revolution*," trans. Andrew Kloes, *TBR* 10 (2019): 78, 81-82. On van Prinsterer's influence on Kuyper and Bavinck, see Harry Van Dyke, "Groen van Prinsterer: godfather of Bavinck and Kuyper," *Calvin Theological Journal* 47, no. 1 (2012): 72-97.

[9] Arie Molendijk, "Transforming Theology: The Institutionalization of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands," in *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion*, ed. Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 67.

[10] It is indisputable that Tiele was the founder of the science of religion in the Netherlands. However, it is debated who is the founder of the science of religion. Basically, there are two candidates; one is Tiele, the other is the German-British scholar Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900). Tiele himself does not agree to view Müller as the founder. He suggests '[leaving] this decision to posterity'; see C. P. Tiele, "On the Study of Comparative Theology," in *The World's Parliament of Religions*, ed. John Henry Barrows, vol. 1 (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893), 586.

science would be a preferred lens through which the nature and character of this discipline could be discovered.[11]

Tiele's project of religious science is comprehensively set out in his Gifford Lectures *Elements of the Science of Religion* (1896-98). In the first pages, Tiele describes the science of religion by pointing out its object:

> The object of our science is not the superhuman itself, but *religion* based on belief in the superhuman and the task of investigating religion; as a historical-psychological, social, and wholly human *phenomenon* undoubtedly belongs to the domain of science.[12]

Three features of the science of religion can be perceived with respect to the statement above. First, this science must be bound up with religion rather than the object of religious faith. This means that religious science in essence differs from theology, whose object, according to Bavinck, is God Himself. Second, religious science is preoccupied with religious phenomena and manifestations. This point of view is fundamentally determined by Tiele's idea of religion, as will be demonstrated. Third, religious science needs to engage with various disciplines, such as historical, psychological and social studies. For Tiele, the development of the other sciences largely '[makes] the existence of a science of religion possible.'[13]

Tiele's view corresponds with P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, who, although he is probably best known for Ethical theology, is reckoned by some among the founding fathers of religious science in the Netherlands. Chantepie de la Saussaye argues that '[t]he object of the science of religion is the study of religion, of its essence and its manifestations.'[14] As with Tiele, Chantepie de la Saussaye sets forth three factors that are essential to religious science. First, 'religion ... should become an object of philosophical knowledge', which excludes the consideration of the divine revelation but is founded on Kant's, Schleiermacher's and Hegel's thoughts. It should be noted that Chantepie de la Saussaye does not mean the lack of the idea of revelation in Kant's, Schleiermacher's and Hegel's systems. His intention is to argue that it is modern philosophy, rather than Christian dogmatics, that first regards religion as the object of philosophical study. Second, the science of religion is conditioned by the philosophy of

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[11] Bavinck appreciatively draws on Tiele's religious science in *Reformed Dogmatics* many times, which will be illustrated in chapter 7, III.A.c.
[12] C. P. Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897-99), 1:5. Emphasis added.
[13] C. P. Tiele, *De Plaats van de Godsdiensten der Natuurvolken in de Godsdienstgeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: P. N. van Kampen & Zoon, 1873), 5.
[14] P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, trans. Breatrice S. Colyer-Fergusson (London: Longmans, 1891), 7.

history, which delves into the history of civilisation and finds out the relation of religious phenomena to other aspects of human life. Third, the science of religion should interact with other disciplines, employing the fruits of the scientific studies of language, archaeology, philosophy, psychology and so forth.[15]

By the comparison of Tiele's and Chantepie de la Saussaye's views of religious science, it could be affirmed that central to this science are the idea of religion and that of development. In the beginning of his Gifford Lecture, Tiele sets out the definition of religion:

> By religion we mean for the present nothing different from what is generally understood by that term that is to say, the aggregate of all those *phenomena* which are invariably termed religious, in contradistinction to ethical, aesthetical, political, and others. I mean those *manifestations of the human mind* in words, deeds, customs, and institutions which testify to man's belief in the superhuman, and serve to bring him into relation with it.[16]

It is plain that for Tiele religious phenomena, which are also called '[the] manifestations of the human mind', are essential to the proper understanding of religion. The meaning of "manifestations" is further illustrated in the second part of these lectures. Therein, Tiele contends that the essence or being of religion should be interpreted in a psychological sense.[17] To a certain degree, Bavinck would be in sympathy with Tiele's contention, as he argued early in 1897 that psychology is of considerable significance to all aspects of dogmatics.[18] One decade later, Bavinck reasserted that 'dogmatics … must become more psychological.'[19] Nonetheless, Bavinck and Tiele differ in that Bavinck maintains that the psychological dimension of religion depends upon the 'objective knowledge of God' as God has revealed.[20] In contradistinction, Tiele submits that 'we must seek for [the being of religion] in the religiosity, or religious frame of mind, in which it has originated. Although in reality the two things are inseparable, we must try to distinguish between the ever-changing manifestations of religion and the sentiment which underlies them.'[21] Given this, it could be argued that Tiele methodologically attempts to build a bridge between the external religious phenomena and the human internal religiosity. As Arie Molendijk rightly notes, Tiele's view of religion cannot

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[15] *Ibid*., 3-5.
[16] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:4. Emphasis added.
[17] *Ibid*., 2:188.
[18] Herman Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1897), 65; Herman Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," trans. Jack Vanden Born, Nelson D. Kloosterman, and John Bolt, ed. John Bolt, *TBR* 9 (2018): 93.
[19] *PR*, 209.
[20] *PR*, 208.
[21] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2:191.

simply be viewed as psychological in character. Rather, Tiele adopts an approach of from-the-outside-to-the-inside: 'Manifestations express underlying constituents.'[22] On this score, Tiele's project of religious science betrays the flavour of his contemporary positivism, which relies completely upon human perception as the way to obtain knowledge.

Molendijk's observation could be attested by Tiele's analysis of the two aspects of religion. Tiele argues that 'religion has a subjective and an objective side namely, religiosity and religion and it is only in the constant action and reaction of these two elements upon each other that the true nature of religion is fully revealed.'[23] Notwithstanding his emphasis on the double aspect of religion, Tiele locates the nature of religion in the subjective side. He writes:

> [Religion] must be sought for in a certain sentiment or disposition in religiosity. Religion is essentially a frame of mind in which all its various elements have their source. Religion is piety, manifesting itself in word and deed, in conceptions and observances, in doctrine and in life.[24]

This religiosity essentially and ultimately originates in '[the human] original, unconscious, innate sense of infinity'.[25] This is 'instinct, or an innate, original, and unconscious form of thought, or form of conception—it is the specifically human element in man, the idea which dominates him.'[26] Interestingly, the concept of instinct is of importance to Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), the leading neo-Calvinist theologian alongside Bavinck. He grounds the human instinct in God's wisdom, being endowed by the human creation after the image of God. The human instinctive life consists in social, moral, religious and other realms. Furthermore, by referring to John Calvin, he maintains that "the seed of religion" reflects the reality of the instinctive foundation in religious realms.[27] It is plain that Kuyper seeks to maintain the harmony of the subjective and the objective aspects of the human instinctive life. By contrast, Tiele takes a subjectivist way to account for the human instinct.

For Tiele, the *a priori* sense of infinity is the precondition to religious science. Inasmuch as this sense is innate to human beings, it is worthwhile for religious science to explain religious phenomena in a psychological way. This is reminiscent of Ernst Troeltsch's theory of "religious *a priori*." According to Troeltsch, religious *a priori* refers to the *a priori* law of

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[22] Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands*, 133.
[23] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2:183.
[24] *Ibid*., 2:196.
[25] *Ibid*., 2:233; also see 228. One may discern the parallel between Tiele and Schleiermacher in this regard. However, Tiele offers a critique of Schleiermacher that the latter's view of 'unconditional sense of dependence … does not account for religion as a whole;' (222).
[26] *Ibid*., 2:231.
[27] Abraham Kuyper, "Our Instinctive Life," trans. John Vriend, in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 260-263.

religious formation of ideas lying in the essence of human reason.[28] In his view, the religious *a priori* is vital to religious science: 'Religious science allows religion to exist as religion and regulate it only according to its own *a priori*.'[29] Likewise, by insisting on the innate sense of infinity, Tiele safeguards the science of religion as a self-governed science that is devoted to the study of 'how that one great psychological phenomenon which we call religion has developed and manifested itself in such various shapes among the different races and peoples of the world.'[30]

The idea of development (*ontwikkeling*) is the other important factor of the science of religion.[31] For Tiele, this idea is particularly significant. His contemporary Chantepie de la Saussaye contends that 'the main idea of Tiele's whole science of religion is *development*.'[32] Tim Murphy even asserts that Tiele's Gifford Lectures are '[t]he clearest and most adamant post-Darwinian use and defence of the concept of development.'[33] According to Tiele, '[r]eligion too, like every human phenomenon, is governed by the all-embracing law of development from the lower to the higher, from the natural to the spiritual.'[34]

Generally, the term "development" or "evolution" has two senses. First, 'the object undergoing development is a unity', within which '[t]he one does not merely succeed or supersede the other, but the one grows out of the other.'[35] Thereby, Tiele articulates the universal unity of religion, having all religious sects become the object of religious science. Second, 'each phase of the evolution has its value, importance, and right of existence, and that it is necessary to give birth to a higher phase, and continues to act in that higher phase.'[36] This reflects Tiele's optimistic attitude toward the development of religion, confirming the *raison d'être* and independence of every stage of the development.

One might ask: How do the independence and the unity of various religious forms co-exist? Tiele maintains the balance between the unity and the independence by the laws of

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[28] Ernst Troeltsch, *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik*, Gesammelte Schriften.II (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1913), 494.
[29] Ernst Troeltsch, *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1905), 53. German original: 'Die Religionswissenschaft läßt die Religion als Religion bestehen und reguliert sie nur aus ihrem eigenen Apriori heraus.'
[30] C. P. Tiele, *Outlines of the History of Religion to the Spread of the Universal Religions*, trans. J. Estlin Carpenter, 7th ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1905), x.
[31] The Dutch word "ontwikkeling" can be translated either "development" or "evolution"; however, the Dutch "*evolutie*" can be used when the writer wants to avoid this ambiguity.
[32] P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Portretten en Kritieken* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1909), 116.
[33] Tim Murphy, "The Concept 'Entwicklung' in German Religionswissenshaft: Before and After Darwin," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11, no. 1 (1999): 15.
[34] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:87.
[35] *Ibid*., 1:29.
[36] *Ibid*., 1:30.

development. According to him, these laws govern and are indispensable to religious development.[37] It should be noted that for Tiele the laws of religious development are not theorems but rather are presupposed. Hence, he designates these laws '[the] working hypothesis', which is necessary for every science.[38] He argues that 'a complete system of laws of development' can be distilled from various religious phenomena in history.[39] Therefore, Chantepie de la Saussaye offers the critique that since 'historical knowledge does not derive its method from the natural science', such laws of religious development, as Tiele claims, lie outside of the human mind and can never be discovered by humans.[40]

For Tiele, due to these laws of religious development, human religiosity, or *a priori* sense of infinity, appears in differing forms in the course of development. As he writes:

> the development of religion does not imply that religion develops locally or temporarily, in one form or another, but that religion, as distinguished from the forms it assumes, is constantly developed in mankind. Its development may be described as the evolution of the religious idea in history, or better as the progress of the religious man, or of mankind as religious by nature.[41]

One may argue that Tiele is under the influence of idealism, particularly Hegel's philosophy. However, Thomas Ryba reminds us that Tiele's religious science is not simply Hegelian, but is also influenced by the philosophies of science which differ from the absolute idealism. More specifically, Tiele depends on 'a conception of scientific structure which was both older than Hegel's and more firmly grounded in the way scientists actually conducted empirical research in the 19th century.'[42]

It is thus indisputable that Tiele's idea of development lays a great emphasis on the development of religious phenomena, through which the essence of religion can be explicated. In this light, underlying Tiele's science of religion is 'a morphological development', which means studying 'religion as a psychological and ethnological phenomenon.'[43] The whole project of Tiele's science of religion could be summed up by the following statement:

> It is a special science or branch of study, and does not belong to general philosophy; but it is the philosophical part of the investigation of *religious phenomena* – a study which *seeks to penetrate to their foundations*. It is not a philosophic creed, or a

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[37] *Ibid*., 1:214.
[38] *Ibid*., 1:219.
[39] *Ibid*., 1:213; also see 216-218.
[40] Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Portretten en Kritieken*, 118.
[41] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:32.
[42] Thomas Ryba, "Comparative Religion, Taxonomies and 19th Century Philosophies of Science: Chantepie De La Saussaye and Tiele," *Numen* XLVIII, no. 3 (2001): 334.
[43] Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands*, 157.

> dogmatic system of what is commonly called natural theology, or a philosophy with a religious tinge, and still less a philosophy regarding God Himself. All this is beyond its province. It leaves these matters to theologians and metaphysicians. It is in fact literally the philosophy of religion … a philosophy which we must have the courage to reform, in accordance with the demands of science in its present state of *development*.[44]

Tiele is confident that a thorough, intensive and extensive investigation of religious phenomena in the history of religious development can attain the knowledge of the essence of religion. In this regard, Tiele anticipates a potential question on the validity of religious science: How can an individual person grasp the knowledge of religions in all nations and places in his or her lifetime? He responds with the definition of science. Tiele argues that 'science is ... an aggregate of researches, all tending to the same purpose, though independent yet mutually connected, and each in particular connected with similar researches on other domains, which thus serve as auxiliary sciences.'[45] This is reminiscent of Tiele's insistence on the contributions of the other sciences to the science of religion. With the assistance of the other sciences, religious sciences can '[seek] to penetrate to their foundations' by the study of 'religious phenomena' in history and all over the world.

The block quote above also reflects Tiele's ambition to reform religious studies and theology. This ambition has already been embodied in his earlier work. According to 'Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap' (Theology and Religious Science) (1866), Tiele's project of religious science serves to generate a scientific study of theology. Tiele points out that there are three factors which hinder the appearance of the scientific study of theology.

> The first is the narrow-mindness, which dares not to be outside the borders of [theology's] own religion. … [Second], the so-called pagan religions were still known too little, the notions that one formed from them were too superficial and defective, the sources that were requisite for their precise knowledge were still not accessible for all. … [The third factor] was the speculative method. … [I]f [theology] wants to become a science, it then must extend its borders and abandon the method of contemplation which is condemned in all other sciences, in order to enter the way of experience, to make the method of induction as much as hers.[46]

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[44] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:15. Emphasis added.
[45] Tiele, "On the Study of Comparative Theology," 588-589.
[46] C. P. Tiele, "Theologie en godsdienstwetenschap," *De Gids* 30, no. 2 (1866): 216-8. Dutch original: 'De eerste is die bekrompenheid, die zich buiten de grenzen harer eigene godsdienst niet waagt. … De zoogenaamd heidensche godsdiensten waren nog te weinig bekend, de voorstellingen die men zich van haar vormde te oppervlakkig en gebrekkig, de bronnen die tot haar juiste kennis noodig waren, nog niet voor allen ontsloten. … Het was de spekulatieve methode. … En daarom, wil zij een wetenschap worden, dan moet zij hare grenzen uitzetten, en de methode der bespiegeling die in alle andere wetenschappen veroordeeld is, mede verlaten, om den weg der ervaring te betreden, de methode der induktie evenzeer tot de hare te maken.'

With this in mind, Sigurd Hjelde maintains that Tiele's intention is by no means to replace theology with the science of religion, but to undertake theology in the new way of religious science so as to safeguard theology within the Dutch academy.[47] However, Hjelde's estimation overlooks the commonality pertaining to religious science in the nineteenth century, that is, that '[it is] a more or less radically empirical affair, informed by sound philosophical and historical method.'[48] Hence, Hjelde seems oblivious to the net result of Tiele's method regarding religious science. Eventually, Tiele's ambition was realised by the Higher Education Act (1876), which introduced religious science into universities and turned theology into religious studies, though the name "faculty of theology" was retained. In Bavinck's view, by this reform, 'theology is maimed and robbed of its heart and life.'[49] Theology becomes preoccupied with numerous religious phenomena occurring in history rather than with God's self-revelation.

C. Summary

It should be conceded that the science of religion rigorously safeguards the place of religion in the modern world. By investigating religious phenomena extensively, it proves that religion is by no means a phase of the development of human beings, which shall fade away eventually. Instead, religion is universal and intrinsic to humanity. However, Tiele's developmental approach to exploring the essence of religion by investigating religious phenomena inevitably leads to the denial of religious particularity, which resonates with Ernst Troeltsch's denial of the absoluteness of Christianity. Troeltsch writes:

> The Christian religion is in every moment of its history a purely historical phenomenon, subject to all the limitations to which any individual historical phenomenon is exposed, *just like the other great religions*. It is to be investigated, in every moment of its history, by the *universal*, verified methods of historical research.[50]

Accordingly, the Christian faith is merely an accident and not a unique religious phenomenon. In view of this, Tiele's claim for the uniqueness of Christianity, which presents the harmony

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[47] Sigurd Hjelde, "The Science of Religion and Theology: The Question of Their Interrelationship," in *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion*, ed. Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 105.
[48] Molendijk, "Introduction," 3.
[49] Herman Bavinck, "Theology and Religious Studies in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands: Appendix B," trans. Harry Boonstra, in *Essays on Religion, Science and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 283.
[50] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions*, trans. David Reid (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 85; emphasis added.

of transcendency and immanency, sounds pale and frail somewhat.[51] In addition, it is unconvincing for him to infer the kernel of all religion, that is the spiritual unity of God and the human being, from the union of Jesus Christ's two natures.[52] Moreover, the idea of revelation becomes redundant; what theology inquiries into is nothing other than what is perceptible and sensible, which can be investigated by general empirical methods. If such were a case, how could theology claim to be the science of the invisible God? How could theology be called "the Queen of the sciences"? How could Christian dogmatics be a science that is grounded in God's revelation and attains the certainty of the knowledge of God? In a letter to his friend and fellow Leiden alumnus Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), therefore, Bavinck emphatically argues that the transformation of theology into religious science is actually to acknowledge that 'God cannot be known and thus the eternal life is unattainable.'[53]

Bavinck acutely discerned the challenges of religious science to theology. In *Godgeleerdheid en godsdienstwetenschap* (1892), Bavinck drew a conclusion that 'theology and religious studies are incompatible and cannot be contained in one department.'[54] The most important reason is that God is the object of theology, which is the fundamental principle of the discipline of theology.[55] To be sure, with the rise of religious science in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, Bavinck on the one hand tried to maintain the scientific nature of theology and its valid place in the Dutch academy, and on the other hand painstakingly defended the essential distinction between theology and religious science.

III. Theological Modernism

If the emergence and flourishing of religious science was the external challenge to the validity of theology as a science in Dutch universities, the nineteenth-century theological modernism was the internal factor that undermined the scientificity of theology. At this point, it is significant to consider how Dutch theologians in that century dealt with the relationship between theology and the other sciences as well as the view of the scientificity of theology.

Before the nineteenth century and particularly under the sway of the Enlightenment, the Western worldview underwent change: the supernatural was being replaced by the natural, with the authority of religion being made subordinate to the autonomy of human reason and

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[51] Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:208-209.
[52] *Ibid.*, 2:193-194.
[53] "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, Kampen, 8 februari 1883," in J. de Bruijn and George Harinck, eds., *Een Leidse Vriendschap. De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje 1875-1921* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1999), 111.
[54] Bavinck, "Theology and Religious Studies," 54.
[55] *Ibid*., 50.

conscience. In the Netherlands, this radical change did not take place at the pace of what happened in the other European countries. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, mainline Dutch Protestant theology committed itself to a high view of the divine revelation in the Bible and the Bible's reliability. Theology played a significant role in society. Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel were widely refused by Dutch theologians at the time because of these German thinkers' surrendering of revelation to reason.[56] A historical factor of this refusal might be the Dutch positive reception of an earlier stage of the Enlightenment at the pre-Kant time, as early as the time of Spinoza. However, around 1700, the Dutch scholars gradually called into doubt that reason can enable humans to establish the true religion and religious uniformity. This distrust of the function of reason in religion had already put down roots so that the Dutch scholars struggled to accept the thoughts of Kant and other German thinkers.[57] Eldred Vanderlaan argues that not until the 1840s did the modern worldview first gain ground in the Netherlands through the study of German philosophy and the influence of scientific realism. In those years, Dutch theologians were not enthusiastic in re-interpreting old doctrines, as German liberal theologians had done.[58] Dutch modernism was more preoccupied with natural science and the influence thereof, which exerted a great impact on their understanding of the Christian faith and the hermeneutics of the Bible.

This can be proved by D. T. Huet's *Wenken opzigtelijk de Moderne theologie* (*Deliberately Beckoning Modern Theology*). According to James Eglinton, this is the first work in the Netherlands to define the term "modernism" theologically. By this work, theological modernism was defined as a theological movement occasioned by Johannes Scholten's *De leer der Hervormde Kerk* (*The Doctrine of the Reformed Church*) and Cornelis Opzoomer's *De weg der wetenschap* (*The Way of Science*).[59] Huet argued that the theological modernism in the nineteenth-century Netherlands was characterised by 'a critical handling of the Bible.'[60] This critical method was conditioned by the appreciation of natural science at the time. As a response to this, Huet set out an absolute antithesis between natural science and the Bible:

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[56] K. H. Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland: Hare Voorbereiding en Eerste Periode* (Groningen: Erven B. Van Der Kamp, 1914), 22-24.
[57] Henri Krop, "From Religion in the Singular to Religions in the Plural: 1700, a Faultline in the Conceptual History of Religion," in *Enlightened Religion: From Confessional Churches to Polite Piety in the Dutch Republic*, ed. Joke Spaans and Jetze Touber (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 21-59.
[58] Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 11-12.
[59] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 2 (notes 5); Johannes Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk*, 1st ed. (Leiden: P. Engels, 1848-50); Cornelis Willem Opzoomer, *De weg der wetenschap, een handboek der logica* (Leiden: J. H. Gebhard, 1851).
[60] D. T. Huet, *Wenken Opzigtelijk Moderne Theologie* ('s Gravenhage: J. M. van 't Haaff, 1858), iii.

> These two [the Bible and science] would not easily be brought into agreement. Certainly: the Bible presupposes faith, and science is unbelieving; the Bible is faithful, and science is suspicious; the Bible is childlishly simple, and science is finely cunning; the Bible gives itself openly, and science aims for exposed points; the Bible speaks the language of religion, and science speaks it from sifting mind; the Bible belongs to God's foolishness and weakness, and science is the wisdom and strength of human beings.[61]

Numerous theologians in the nineteenth-century Netherlands painstakingly wrestled with this antithetical relationship between the Christian faith and natural science, which could be traced back as far as to the Groninger school in the 1830s.

A. The Groninger School

The Groninger school, whose thought centred on the University of Groningen, shaped its theology under the influence of Phillip Willem van Heusde (1778-1839), who was one of the first Dutch advocates of Enlightened German theology and philosophy.[62] One aspect of van Heusde's legacies for the Groninger theologians was the reception of the German *Vermittlungstheologie* (mediation theology), one of whose goals was to reconcile the traditional Protestant doctrines of the Reformation confessions with the modern studies of science, philosophy and history.[63] This was express in the Groninger school's refashioning the idea of faith. The Groninger school argued that the Christian faith by no means referred to dogmatic articles and teachings. Rather, faith was 'a trustful self-giving to Christ and God,' which was generated by the human experience of God's love.[64] K. H. Roessingh is thus convinced that the Groninger theologians' approach to the relationship between Christianity and scientific culture must differ from that of old liberalism, which subordinated Christian faith

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[61] Huet, *Wenken Opzigtelijk Moderne Theologie*, 17. Dutch original: 'Zij zullen het niet ligt eens worden, deze twee. Natuurlijk: de Bijbel onderstelt geloof, en de Wetenschap is ongeloovig; de Bijbel is ter goeder trouw, en de Wetenschap is achterdochtig; de Bijbel is kinderlijk eenvoudig, en de Wetenschap is fijn gesle pen; de Bijbel geeft zich bloot, en de Wetenschap mikt op de onbedekte punten; de Bijbel spreekt de taal der godsdienst, en de Wetenschap die van het ziftend verstand; de Bijbel behoort tot het dwaze en zwakke Gods, en de Wetenschap is de wijsheid en sterkte van den mensch.'

[62] Further on the Groninger school and its theology, see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 6-11; James Hutton Mackay, *Religious Thought in Holland during the Nineteenth Century* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), 45-82.

[63] Ragner Holte, *Die Vermittlungstheologie. Ihrer theologischen Grundbegriffe kritische untersucht* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), 9-10. Holte argues that the second purpose of *Vermittlungstheologie* was to build and enhance a theological and institutional union between German Reformed and Lutheran churches. On mediating theology, also see Matthias Gockel, "Mediating Theology in Germany," in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 301-318.

[64] Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 15. The Groninger school accepted Schleiermacher's notion of the "feeling of absolute dependence", but meanwhile added to it the "feeling of need" (*sensus indigentiae*) and the "feeling of love" (*sensus amoris*); see Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland*, 30.

to modern science.[65] For Groninger school, there was no longer contradiction between scientific statements and those of faith insofar as the latter were predicated upon religious feeling. In other words, the criterion to judge the place of a statement in dogmatics lays in one's pious mind rather than in the natural, historical or philosophical sciences. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the Groninger school repudiated historical and scientific truth. Rather, based on human inner experience, dogmatics began to seek for the truth of Christianity as 'known from the Bible, from the history and from its own experience.'[66] It could be argued that the Groninger school advocated the mediation between theology and modern natural science by the prioritisation of religious feeling. In essence, it articulated an independence model that cut theology off from the other sciences.

B. The Leiden School

The concern of *Vermittlungstheologie* did not disappear in the Leiden school, though the Leiden theologians disagreed with the Groninger school on the practice of mediation between theology and the natural sciences. This disagreement was due to the founder of the Leiden school, Johannes Scholten (1811-1885), who lived with his uncle van Heusde while studying in Utrecht. Despite that in his inaugural lecture at the University of Franeker in 1840 Scholten broke with the *Heusdiaans* by critiquing their Christology as inherently Arian and Docetic, it was probable that van Heusde's advocation of *Vermittlungstheologie* continued to make an impact on Scholten.[67]

In order to understand Scholten's modernist view of theology and its relation to the other sciences, first of all, his theory of the two principles of the Reformation should be set out. In *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen* (*The Doctrine of the Reformed Church in Its Fundamental Principles*), Scholten argues that the formal principle of the Reformation is the Holy Scripture that is the source and criterion of Christian theology (volume 1), and that the material principle is the absolute sovereignty of God, that is, God's absolute supremacy and the particularity of His free grace in Jesus Christ (volume 2).[68] The latter, which reflects Scholen's idealism and theological determinism, contributes significantly to shaping

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[65] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland*, 27.
[66] *Ibid*., 32.
[67] See Mackay, *Religious Thought in Holland during the Nineteenth Century*, 88; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 13-14.
[68] Johannes Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (Leiden: P. Engels, 1861), on the formal principle, particularly see 1:76-96; on the material principle, particularly see 2:26-52. This work was under the influence of Alexander Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, Dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt*, 2 vols. (Zürich: Orell, Füssli und Com, 1844-1847).

Scholten's views of theology, nature and the world. On the other hand, Scholten's debate with Cornelis Willem Opzoomer (1821-1892), who was championed as the second father of theological modernism in the Netherlands, brought about a great change in Scholten's thinking, that is, the transfer of his emphasis largely from the ideal to the empirical.[69]

These two factors lay down the monistic and mechanical character of Scholten's theological predestinationism. For Scholten, this predestinationism is the fundamental principle for the Reformed Church's engagement with the world and nature: 'The Reformed Church has the calling to build further on its premise that the final result of the development of the world must fulfil God's eternal plan, to abolish dualism out of the power of its principles.'[70] One would be impressed that Scholten's optimistic gesture toward the natural world falls short of a healthy view of the supernatural. As Bavinck has noted, notwithstanding that Scholten's theology has the merit that 'God is immanent and reveals Himself in all created things', he nevertheless belittles special divine revelation insofar as God has revealed Himself in all His works, in nature, in history.[71] Bavinck's judgment can be attested by Scholten's methodological statement in *De leer der Hervormde Kerk*:

> My point of view is, as one intends, empirical, insofar as, according to my conviction, all science must begin with the observation of facts, but not, as if I would think, that science was limited to the empirically observed, but to come from the empirically ascertained to the knowledge of invisible truth, which is recognised in observation by reason. Thus, there is no observation without reflection, also no reflection without observation, but reflection is grounded in observation.[72]

Accordingly, Vanderlaan rightly estimates that central to Scholten's theological system is the rationale of 'from nature and man to God.'[73] Given this, Scholten reckoned modern natural science to provide the indispensable tools of seeking for and validating what is God's revelation in nature.

This high view of natural science was not unfamiliar to Cornelis Willem Opzoomer, who was the best representative of the empirical school in the nineteenth-century Netherlands.

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[69] Hendrikus Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology: Report of a Personal Journey*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 102.
[70] Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen*, 2:418-419.
[71] Herman Bavinck, "Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands," trans. Geerhardus Vos, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 3, no. 10 (1892): 215.
[72] Scholten, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen*, 1:lxi. Dutch original: 'Mijn standpunt is, zoo men wil, empirisch, inzoover, naar mijne overtuiging, alle wetenschap met de waarneming van feiten beginnen moet, doch niet, alsof ik meenen zou, dat de wetenschap tot het, empirisch waargenomene te beperken ware, maar om van het empirisch geconstateerde te komen tot de kennis der onzigtbare waarheid, die door de rede in het waargenomene erkend wordt. Dus geene waarneming zonder bespiegeling; ook geene bespiegeling zonder waarneming; maar bespiegeling gegrond op waarneming.'
[73] Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 33.

Three years after Scholten's arrival at the University of Leiden, Opzoomer took the post of the professor of philosophy at the University of Utrecht in 1846 and occupied the chair until 1889. As has been mentioned earlier, Opzoomer had a debate with Scholten, which exerted a great impact upon the latter. This debate originated in the conflict between Opzoomer's empiricism and positivism and Scholten's idealism. Opzoomer's positivistic and empiristic philosophy is clearly laid out in *De Twijfel des Tijds* (*The Doubt of the Age*), which was a speech for the commencement of the academic lessons at the University of Utrecht in 1850. There, Opzoomer maintained that what philosophy could offer is uncertainty, doubt and inter-contradictory points of view.[74] By contrast, he maintained, the conflict between different parties could be subsided by the natural sciences, wherein observation and experience furnishes fully satisfied proof for all propositions.[75] This positivism and high praise of the natural sciences were reinforced by Opzoomer's definition of truth. He wrote:

> The common answer to the question what truth is, granted, is completely useless. An accurate distinction between the two differing kinds of received truths, and the attention to the way which has brought us to them, make us arrive at a different answer and explanation for truth: 1. everything that is merely the simple, not contaminated by conclusions, the explanation of our *perceptions*; and 2. everything that is derived from the *perceptions*, without being repudiated by others, according to the method of *the natural sciences*, and moreover competent to make predictions which affirms the result.[76]

What is plain here is Opzoomer's emphasis on a positivistic view of knowledge and the methodological significance of the natural sciences for acquiring truths, no matter the immediate or the mediate.[77] Without hesitation, Opzoomer applied this epistemological method to religion, arguing that two philosophies could deal with religious phenomena. The first is the philosophy of positivism, whose principle is that knowledge does not stand outside of the sphere of experience. The second is the philosophy of experience, which can defend religion and Christianity.[78]

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[74] Cornelis Willem Opzoomer, *De Twijfel des Tijds. De Wegwijzer der toekomst* (Leiden: J. H. Gebhard & Comp, 1850), 16-17.
[75] *Ibid.*, 26.
[76] Opzoomer, *De weg der wetenschap*, 17; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'Het gewone antwoord, op de vraag, wat waarheid is, gegeven, is volkomen nutteloos. Een nauwkeurige onderscheiding van de twee verschillende soorten van verkregene waarheden, en opmerkzaamheid op den weg, die ons tot beiden gebragt heeft, doet ons tot een ander antwoord komen, en voor waarheid verklaren: 1. alles, wat slechts de eenvoudige, door geen gevolgtrekkingen verontreinigde, verklaring onzer gewaarwordingen is; en 2. alles, wat uit die gewaarwordingen, zonder door anderen te worden gelogenstraft, volgens de methode der natuurwetenschappen is afgeleid, en daarenboven tot voorspellingen in staat stelt, die de uitkomst bevestigt.'
[77] Opzoomer argued that there are two kinds of truths: the immediate and the mediate. The former expresses our own perceptions, whereas the latter is inferred and drawn out from the former; see *ibid.*, 18.
[78] Opzoomer, *De Twijfel des Tijds*, 29.

To contrast Opzoomer with Scholten, it is striking that although they held differing (even opposing) positions, they finally agreed in the high value of empirical reality and the natural sciences. They would concur that by the natural sciences the complete truth about God can be found in the visible world. Hence, Roessingh rightly notes that notwithstanding the conflict between Scholten and Opzoomer, 'the actual content of their systems, the result of their research, is evidently to be of one spirit.'[79] In short, this naturalism and modern scientism rendered the Christian faith cold, merely propositional and subordinate to human perceptions, which the ethical theology resolutely condemned.

C. The Ethical School

In the nineteenth-century Netherlands, the movement of ethical theology occurred at nearly the same time as theological modernism. Hendrikus Berkhof describes this movement as a 'parallel to the theologies of mediation' which had appeared in Germany and England.[80] It sought to mediate between traditional orthodoxy and theological modernism, between the Christian faith and other sciences, by laying the emphasis on the ethical factor of the Christian faith. This could be clearly seen in the theological system of Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874), who co-founded the ethical theology with J. H. Gunning (1829-1905).[81]

With a Reformed upbringing in his youth, Chantepie de la Saussaye went to study theology at the University of Leiden in 1836. One of his teachers was Johan Frederik van Oordt (1794-1852), who brought the theology of the University of Groningen to Leiden and exerted a great influence on Chantepie de la Saussaye. After participating in ministry in Leeuwarden, Leiden and Rotterdam successively, he became a professor at the University of Groningen in 1872.

In order to seek a *via media* between faith and reason, between theology and the other sciences, Chantepie de la Saussaye aligned himself with *Vermittlungstheologie*.[82] He first recognised the value of the outcomes of modern sciences. According to him, to deny the true sciences, which bring about irrefutable results on fixed grounds, is *de facto* antithetical to 'the

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[79] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland*, 147.
[80] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology*, 105.
[81] Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye is the father of P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, who is well-known for his scientific study of religion, as mentioned earlier. J. H. Gunning was a minister in The Hague from 1861 to 1882. Afterwards, he became an ecclesiastical professor at the Amsterdam's City University. In 1889, he moved to the University of Leiden. Gunning was Bavinck's critical friend, and they had many theological debates and conversations; see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 149-150, 161, 227.
[82] According to Bavinck, Chantepie de la Saussaye regarded himself belonging to 'the great party of the alleged mediation theologians'; Herman Bavinck, *De Theologie van prof. dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye. Bijdrage tot de Kennis der Ethische Theologie*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: D. Donner, 1903), 8; also see "Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands," 221.

foundational principles of Christian faith', which, in other words, is 'the unbelief in God's word, in the future of humankind, in the promise of the Lord, in the guidance of the Spirit.'[83] Interestingly, Bavinck argued in a similar way that the 'facts advanced by geology … are just as much words of God as the content of Holy Scripture and must therefore be believingly accepted by everyone.'[84] In spite of the similar appreciation of the findings of science, they differ in that, whereas Bavinck highlighted the importance of dogmatic system to the Christian faith, Chantepie de la Saussaye relocated the essence of the Christian faith not in doctrinal expressions but rather in the ethical manifestations of the Christian life. Chantepie de la Saussaye's ethical principle to deal with the Christian faith can be summarised as follows: 'the recognition of the objective nature of truth was more a matter of manifestation – not in the intellect, but in the conscience and life of the Christian.'[85] It should be clarified here that for Chantepie de la Saussaye the term "ethical" refers to something more than morality. Rather, it indicates 'something close to what we mean by "existential".'[86] Given this, Bavinck rightly observed that for ethical theologians the human being 'knows and understands the truth not by reason and intellect, but by his soul, his heart, his conscience, in his capacity as a true man, *a moral being*.'[87] In this way, truth and life are inseparably bound together.[88] Chantepie de la Saussaye hence contended that the true zeal for Reformed orthodoxy does not consist in doctrinal battles, but rather in the expressions of the practical goal of life.[89] In this light, he held fast to a bidirectional movement between doctrine and life as two polarities. Meanwhile, he maintained that theology has the legitimate right to exist in the academy.

> The doubt about the right of the existence of theological faculty rests on the doubt about the scientific right of theology itself. Is it not that it was called the Queen before but now is narrowly tolerated as maidservant (*ancilla*) that indeed refers to religious faith, but not to a science of faith, a science about God and divine things? *Science— so is claimed— has only to do with phenomena, with their connection, not with their ultimate and deepest ground.* This is not investigated. The subject matter of what is called theology so far is divided under the sections, philology, history and philosophy, but what held together the subject matter is the religious

[83] D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *De Crisis. Kerkelijke Tijdvragen*, 2nd ed. (Rotterdam: Wenk, 1868), 5-6.
[84] *RD*, 2:501; *GD*, 2:464.
[85] George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, "The Nineteenth Century," in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 475.
[86] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology*, 106.
[87] Bavinck, "Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands," 221; emphasis added.
[88] Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 156.
[89] Chantepie de la Saussaye, *De Crisis*, 71.

> idea, which is the idea of God and of his relation to the world in general and to humanity in particular, remains *outside the field of science*.[90]

It is plain that Chantepie de la Saussaye's mediating approach is to separate theology from the other sciences by withdrawing the Christian faith from the realm of empirical reality. This corresponds with the model of independence advocated by the Groninger school, as has been demonstrated earlier. However, Chantepie de la Saussaye's approach deprives theology of its scientificity and renders theology thoroughly non-empirical. Taking his method further, theology would lapse into mysticism or agnosticism. Now that God is outside the empirical world, either the idea of God is generated by human imagination and fantasy, or humans cannot attain the veracious knowledge of God.

D. Malcontents

When it comes to the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the Second Golden Age (the early twentieth century), the situation changed. An increasing number of students chose to study technical sciences and the natural sciences rather than theology or law. According to Jan Bank and Maarten van Buuren, there were over sixty percent of students studying theology and law in 1890; however, the number dramatically declined in the last ten years of the nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, technical science, commerce, math and physics became favourite among most students.[91] This is because partly of the creation of the Higher Burgher Schools by the prime minister Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798-1872)—to educate the new middle class in professional training without sending them to universities, partly of a series of strategies of educational reform in the 1870s, which triggered the expansion of university research.[92]

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[90] D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *De Plaats der Theologische Wetenschap in de Encyclopedie der Wetenschappen* (Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1872), 7-8; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'De twijfel aan het recht van bestaan der theologische faculteit rust op den twijfel aan het wetenschappelijk recht der theologie zelve. Is het niet zoo, dat zij die te voren *regina* heette, thans ter nauwernood als *ancilla* geduld wordt, dat men ja, het godsdienstig geloof laat gelden, maar eene wetenschap des geloofs, eene wetenschap omtrent God en goddelijke zaken niet? De wetenschap — zoo wordt beweerd — heeft alleen te doen met, verschijnselen, met hunnen samenhang, niet met hun laatsten en diepsten grond. Deze is onnavorschbaar. De leerstof van hetgeen men tot hiertoe theologie noemde, worde verdeeld onder de hoofdstukken, philològie, historie, philosophie, maar wat die leerstof samenhield, de religieuse idee, dat is de idee van God en van zijne betrekking tot de wereld in het algemeen, tot den mensch in het bijzonder, blijve buiten het gebied der wetenschap;' also see 17, 23-24, 26, 36-38.

[91] Jan Bank and Maarten van Buuren, *1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture*, trans. Lynne Richards and John Rudge, Dutch Culture in a European Perspective, vol. 3 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 247.

[92] Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 49; Bastiaan Willink, "Origins of the Second Golden Age of Dutch Science after 1860: Intended and Unintended Consequences of Educational Reform," *Social Studies of Science* 21, no. 3 (1991): 512-519.

Year	Law		Mathematics & Physics		Technical Science		Business		Total	
1880/81-1889/90	3807	20.1	1739	9.7					29.8	18894
1890/91-1899/00	4969	18.0	3644	13.2					31.2	27606
1900/01-1909/10	6575	17.7	4869	13.1	5719	15.4			46.2	37119
1910/11-1919/20	9332	16.1	5814	10.0	15762	27.1	2214	3.8	57.0	58083
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%	No.

Table 1 The Statistics of Students and Subjects from 1880-1920[93]

In those years, Dutch natural science and scholarship attained high achievements. Jacobus van 't Hoff (1877-96) was awarded the very first Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1901. In the following year, the Nobel Prize for Physics was granted to Hendrik Lorentz (1877-1910) and Pieter Zeeman (1894-1935). At the national and the social levels, the natural sciences were being prioritised over theology.[94] Interestingly and notably, the idea of godless religion had almost perished in the Netherlands in the 1890s and the early twentieth century; to ground theology in human moral nature was increasingly rejected.[95] The supernatural characteristics of religion were re-introduced into religion and theology. In Bavinck's words, 'the "period of [Ernest] Renan" (with its scientific materialism, its religious modernism, its moral utilitarianism, its aesthetic naturalism, and its political liberalism) is no longer the spirit of the age.'[96] 'Doctrines that had long since been viewed as outdated and dismissed … have again come into conversation … The richness of religion speech in believing circles has awakened jealousy, and the ancient Christian confession has found an appreciative verdict among many.'[97] This new tendency is labelled 'young moderns', 'malcontents' or 'moderns of the

[93] Joh. de Vries, "De academicus en het bedrijfsleven: historisch perspectief," in *Jonge academici en het bedrijfsleven*, ed. A. L. Mok (Rotterdam: Universitaire Pers, 1972), 123.
[94] On further, see Bank and van Buuren, *1900*, 249-268.
[95] Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 96-97.
[96] *CWV*, 23. The philosophy of Ernest Renan (1823–1892), which advocated scientific materialism, dominated the climate of the Netherlands of the late nineteenth century. Cf. George Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion: A Case Study of Herman Bavinck's Engagement with Modern Culture," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 71-72.
[97] Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 87; also see 92; cf. Herman Bavinck, *Geleerdheid en Wetenschap* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1905), 19-20.

right.'[98] Nonetheless, it does not say that there was no anti-supernatural voice. B. D. Eerdmans (1868-1948) asserted that however attractive the supernatural worldview might be, it would be repudiated by sober perception.[99]

By the survey of the relation and tensions between theology and the other sciences, particularly the natural sciences, the contour of theological modernism has been sketched clearly. Briefly, as Mackay observes, '[theological modernism] was an attempt to combine a positivist or naturalistic view of life and of the world with the Christian faith.'[100] In so doing, all modernist theologians, without any exception, treated theology under the guidance of the other sciences rather than under the authority of Holy Scripture. This theological modernism was one of the targets of Bavinck's scientific theology. Bavinck held an opposing position: 'At every moment science and art come into contact with Scripture, the *principia* for the entire life are given in Scripture.'[101]

IV. Concluding Remark: On Defending the Authentic Scientificity of Theology against the Stream

The investigations of *Religiewetenschap* and theological modernism in the nineteenth-century Netherlands show that a number of Bavinck's contemporaries attempted either to subordinate theology to the other sciences, or to transform theology into a scientific study of religion, or to judge and deny the scientificity of theology under the criteria of the other sciences. Given these, it suffices to say that Bavinck's mission was to safeguard and demonstrate the scientificity of theology *per se* and to debunk the relevant criticism.

To what extent do these historical contexts contribute to the formation of Bavinck's view of theology as a science? Are *Religiewetenschap* and theological modernism the ultimate causes of his scientific theology? As laid down in the beginning of this chapter, historicism is repudiated here. These historical contexts are the *accidents*, the "stream", against which Bavinck makes use of received Reformed traditions, the *substance*. In this light, one would find, without denying the development of his theology, the consistency of Bavinck's view of theology as a science in the years before and after the 1890s, when the content of modernism changed.[102]

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[98] Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 106; Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 116.
[99] B. D. Eerdmans, *"Moderne" Orthodoxie of "Orthodox" Modernisme* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1911), 12.
[100] Mackay, *Religious Thought in Holland during the Nineteenth Century*, 134.
[101] *GD*, 1:416; *RD*, 1:445; rev.
[102] The development of Bavinck's theology can be seen through the development of his engagement with modernism; Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 60-77.

In the year of being appointed as the professor at the Theological School in Kampen, Bavinck emphatically argued in 'De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk' (The Scientific Calling of Our Church) (1882):

> Now a Church without theology is a body without head. A theology without a Church dies. Church without theology languishes. The Christian Church has felt that from the beginning. ... And the Protestant churches were conscious of it equally well and much better. *Protestantism and science belong together*. A university was Calvin's ideal. And his example was followed in the Reformed churches everywhere.[103]

For Bavinck, scientificity is intrinsic to the Christian faith; its seed has already been sown in Christianity at the outset. Thus, he encouraged his Reformed orthodox contemporaries to live out 'a flourishing scientific life' in adhering to the scientific tradition of Christianity.[104] Bavinck's point of view is not unique but corresponds with that of Kuyper. In his *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, Kuyper writes:

> first, although theology is no abstract speculation, but as a positive science has its origin from life itself, in this first period it furnished a so-many-sided intellectual activity, that *to-day there is almost no single department of theology which does not trace its beginnings to this first period*. And, secondly, in that in this first period the several tendencies which henceforth were to *dominate* the study of theology delineate themselves almost completely.[105]

Plainly, although Kuyper maintains that it was not until Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* that theology matured into a science, his argument nevertheless presses the claim that the seed of scientific theology was first sown many centuries ago.[106] Therefore, in his fourth Stone Lecture, Kuyper defends the scientificity of the Christian faith and explicates what benefits modern sciences could gain from theology, particularly of the Calvinist sort. He argues that '[t]here is found hidden in Calvinism an impulse, an inclination, an incentive, to scientific investigation.'[107] More importantly, Calvinism 'has fostered *love for science* and restored to science *its domain*', and 'has advanced its *indispensable liberty*.'[108] This high view of Calvinist

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[103] Herman Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," *De Vrije Kerk* 8, no. 2-3 (1882): 98-9; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'Nu is eene Kerk zonder Theologie een lichaam zonder hoofd. Eene Theologie zonder eene Kerk sterft. Eene Kerk zonder Theologie kwijnt. De Christelijke Kerk heeft dat van den aanvang af gevoeld. ... En de Protestantsche Kerken waren zich daar even goed en nog veel beter bewust van. Protestantisme en wetenschap hooren bij elkander. Eene Universiteit was Calvijns ideaal. En zijn voorbeeld werd in de Geref. Kerken allerwege gevolgd.'
[104] *Ibid*., 99.
[105] *EST*, 644-645; *EHG*, 2:600; emphasis added.
[106] *EHG*, 1:103.
[107] Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1899), 143.
[108] *Ibid.*, 166.

contribution to modern sciences, Bavinck and Kuyper argue, is a hallmark of neo-Calvinism––the nationwide movement in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, which aimed to revive Calvinism to penetrate every facet of national life and within which Bavinck was deeply involved.

Given this, it is beyond doubt that Bavinck's defence of theology's scientificity treated as fact that scientificity is innate to Christian theology (especially Protestant theology), and that the scientific nature of theology had been mishandled by modernist theologians and the scholars of religious science in the nineteenth-century Netherlands. To this extent, *Religiewetenschap* and theological modernism were the occasions by which Bavinck sought to demonstrate the scientific nature of theology.

Now that theology is, for Bavinck, intrinsically scientific, what is the character of a distinctly scientific theology? How does Bavinck define scientific theology? Are there any rationales weaving together various doctrinal *loci* into a scientific system? Has Bavinck robustly and convincingly responded those challenges to scientific theology? Or as Katherine Sonderegger has argued, does Bavinck belong rather in the ranks of the mediating theologians?[109]

[109] Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), xxi, notes 1.

Chapter 3 Herman Bavinck on Theology as the Science of God

Bavinck was first and foremost a man of science.[1]

W. B. Kristensen

I. Introduction

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) enrolled as a theological student together with Bavinck at the University of Leiden in 1874. Although their careers went in different ways—Snouck Hurgronje became a scholar of Islam and the foremost advisor of the Dutch government on affairs in the East Indies, whereas Bavinck became a pastor and then dogmatician—they built a lifelong friendship from their student years in Leiden onwards.[2] On 18 June 1895, Snouck Hurgronje wrote a letter to Bavinck after reading the first volume of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. He said:

> It is true that I imagine myself in your faith somewhat but cannot call myself your fellow believer; however, I do not regard myself as being in possession of an unbelief or a science or theory which would stand higher than your conviction. … For myself, I disregard the world of the absolute as the object of science and all scientific discussions of metaphysical subjects give me the impression of a description of colours by the blind, who, for example, would give the name of a sound or tone to each colour.[3]

Clearly, despite Bavinck's comprehensive and lengthy discourse on the scientific nature of theology in the *Reformed Dogmatics*, Snouck Hurgronje persisted in rejecting the legitimacy of theology as a science due to theology's metaphysical character. Is Snouck Hurgronje's informal criticism of Bavinck's scientific theology justified? How did Bavinck respond to his close friend's euphemistic objection?

In fact, we cannot ascertain if Bavinck wrote in reply to Snouck Hurgronje to account for his view of scientific theology in a more detailed way. No such letter is extant. Nonetheless, it could be imagined how Bavinck would demonstrate the scientific nature of theology according to his holistic view of scientific theology as elaborated in his numerous writings. In this way, we can find out, on the one hand, how Bavinck wrestled with the various threats to the scientific

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[1] W. B. Kristensen, "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work," trans. Laurence O'Donnell, *Reformed Faith & Practice* 3, no. 1 (2018): 41.

[2] Further on the friendship between Snouck Hurgronje and Bavinck, see J. de Bruijn and George Harinck, "Inleiding," in J. de Bruijn and George Harinck, eds., *Een Leidse Vriendschap. De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje 1875-1921* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1999), 7-13.

[3] "Snouck Hurgronje aan Bavinck, Weltevreden, 18 juni, 1895," de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 144-145. This letter was Snouck Hurgronje's reply to Bavinck's earlier letter, which was not preserved.

nature of theology in the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Netherlands by his project of scientific theology, and on the other hand, what the rationales of Bavinck's scientific theology are. In the course of examining Bavinck's project of scientific theology, the fundamental idea therein can be perceived: theology is the science of God, that is, the science about God and of knowing God. By pinning down this core idea, "scientific theology" can be articulated as a meta-paradigm that epitomises the fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's system to set forth a big picture of his dogmatic theology.

Before the discourse on the rationale of Bavinck's scientific theology in next two chapters, this chapter will first explore Bavinck's view of theology as the science of God and his scientific theology in neo-Calvinism more broadly, particularly by the comparison with Abraham Kuyper's and Geerhardus Vos's scientific theologies. It is worth noting that one significant trait of Bavinck's discourse on scientific theology is his simultaneously and continuously having in mind both theology and the other sciences. This is significantly related to Bavinck's ambition to defend theology as an independent discipline in the university in confrontation with religious science and the natural sciences. Given this, Bavinck's definition of science in general needs be presented prior to the analysis of his view of theology as a particular science.

II. Bavinck's General Definition of Science

A. Twofold *Wetenschap*

In the Anglophone world, the word "science" excludes humanities disciplines, let alone theology. However, that is not the case in the Dutch language, where the term *wetenschap* applies generally to higher reflective forms of knowledge and includes humanities disciplines. In particular, while delivering the Stone Lectures to English-speaking audiences at Princeton Theological Seminary, Bavinck emphatically argues that 'natural science is not the only science, and cannot be.'[4] Evidently, he holds a broader sense of *wetenschap* (science). Prior to the analysis of this broader sense, Bavinck's view of the landscape of science should be presented first. From this vantage point, his definition of science will be grasped more properly.

Bavinck holds fast to a twofold notion of *wetenschap*, which is the motif dominating his notion of science. In Bavinck's corpus, *Christelijke Wetenschap* is the ideal one presenting to us this motif. This booklet was Bavinck's response to the Remonstrant professor Herman IJ.

[4] *PR*, 84.

Groenewegen (1862-1920), who held a positivistic view of science—that is, knowledge is confined within the sphere of perceivable physical objects—and with whom Bavinck debated.[5]

While teaching in Kampen in the 1880s-90s, Bavinck developed his theory of science, and his view of *wetenschap* has largely matured before moving to the *Vrije Universiteit* in 1902.[6] In *Christelijke Wetenschap* (1904), Bavinck's purpose is to overthrow the positivistic sense of science and spell out what Christian science is. In the nineteenth century, generally speaking, positivism denoted that knowledge can be, or can only be, obtained through human sense and perception, which was the ground of human science and stood against idealism at the time.[7] Bavinck incisively perceived the ethos of science in his era, that is, that all sciences were predicated on empiricism and induction so that 'the human mind cannot rise to the invisible and eternal things, neither can it penetrate into the ground of phenomena.'[8] In this sense, science is merely positivistic and restrained within the visible and perceptible world. In response to positivism of his time, Bavinck first argued that the positivistic view of science was just one of numerous definitions of science, judging that this narrower notion actually contradicts the nature of science and the character of truth.[9] Moreover, by laying emphasis on human perception, he maintained that positivism eventually leads to subjectivism, scepticism and the destruction of all knowledge of truth.[10]

For Bavinck, the Achilles heel of positivism is its ignorance of the two dimensions of science: the visible and the invisible.[11] This means that one science is preoccupied with the visible world, whereas the other science, say theology, investigates what is beyond human perception. Although the outward world has impacts on the human mind, internal to human beings are the impressions, emotions and the decisions of human will, which never produce real things outside of humans. This means that human consciousness is capable of being clearly aware of 'the difference between the physical and the psychical, between object and subject, between material and spirit.' In this light, Bavinck believes, it is untenable to argue that there

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[5] On the debates between Bavinck and Groenewegen, see Marinus de Jong, "The Heart of the Academy: Herman Bavinck in Debate with Modernity on the Academy, Theology, and the Church," in *The Kuyper Center Review Volume 5: Church and Academy*, ed. Gordon Graham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 62-75; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 228-229.

[6] Herman Bavinck, *De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1883); Herman Bavinck, *Het Recht der Kerken en de Vrijheid der Wetenschap* (Kampen: Ph. Zalsman, 1899); Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 133-210.

[7] Rom Harré, "Positivist Thought in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870–1945*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11-26.

[8] *CW*, 23.

[9] *CW*, 32.

[10] *CW*, 34-35.

[11] Bavinck usually refers to "the invisible" by "the spiritual".

is only a sensual-perceptible world, which is the sole object and content of science.[12] As such, Bavinck's view of the inner experience of human beings forms an important part of his critique of positivism.

What is the intention of the psychical study of these inner phenomena of human beings? Bavinck contends that psychical study by no means refers back to the sensual and physical nature. '[Mental impressions] also point back to reality, not of the sensual but of the spiritual nature. In our consciousness, we find awareness, perceptions, impressions, etc., which refer back to a true, good and beautiful realm.'[13] This echoes Bavinck's saying in *Beginselen der Psychologie* (*Foundations of Psychology*) (1897) that the human mind can penetrate into 'the essence, the idea, the logos of things' so as to 'ascend to the highest ideas.'[14] The action of penetration and ascension is further explained in the second edition (1923): 'And the human spirit can also raise itself from all the earthly and visible to the eternal, invisible things, to the highest ideas, to God, the origin and ultimate goal of everything.'[15] It is explicit that Bavinck relates science to the invisible and spiritual world regardless of the limitation of the physical world. This means that he thinks of the object of science as consisting in two worlds, that is, the visible and the invisible, the natural and the spiritual. Therefore, he argues that the 'whole magnificent invisible world is as much a reality to us as the "real world" that we perceive with our senses.'[16] In short, Bavinck applies realism to both the visible and the invisible worlds.

Having investigated the twofold nature of science in *Christelijke Wetenschap*, it can be anticipated that Bavinck's definition of science will be broad. Moreover, this outlook on science paves the way for the justification of scientific nature of theology in terms of its spiritual character.

B. The Notion of Science

Bavinck's idea of twofold science is pervasive in his works since his very first journal article 'Geloofswetenschap' (The Science of Faith) (1880).[17] Therein, Bavinck argued that believing and knowing are not separated and do not contradict one another; rather, he argued, believing in a hypothesis is the point of departure for *every* science. Hence, theology of course has its

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[12] *CW*, 38-39.
[13] *CW*, 40.
[14] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 19.
[15] Herman Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1923), 40. This argument is absent in the first edition. This observation is not made in the English translation; Cf. Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," 47.
[16] *RD*, 1:221; *GD*, 1:194.
[17] Herman Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," *De Vrije Kerk* 6, no. 11 (november 1880): 510-527; reprinted in "Geloofswetenschap (1880)," in *Kennis en Leven*, ed. C. B. Bavinck (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1922), 1-12.

place in the sphere of science. Notably, this article was published in *De Vrije Kerk* several months after Bavinck obtained his doctorate in theology from the University of Leiden but several months before he became the minister of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* church in Franeker. The historical contexts prove the significance of Bavinck's article. On the one hand, while the Free University was founded in 1878, it was officially opened on 20 October 1880, several weeks before the publication of this early article. Although Bavinck did not state his intention to lend support to the Free University, this article apparently furnished a strong endorsement of the University, demonstrating the due place of theology in the university. On the other hand, the journal *De Vrije Kerk* was established by Bavinck's denomination, the Christian Reformed Church. Although not all seceders of the Christian Reformed Church were anti-science, a stream of seceders combatted *wetenschap* fiercely, who were conservative and attempted to limit theology within the confines of the Church and seminary.[18] In this sense, Bavinck's article was a reminder to his conservative fellows that theology should reach the sphere outside the Church and seminary. The publication of the article signifies that Bavinck's reminder was, at least, recognised by some of *Christelijke Gereformeerde* theologians, albeit that not all members of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde* church would agree with him. As has been mentioned in chapter 1, Bavinck has already had the aspiration to practise theology in the university in 1880. Hence, it seems clear that from the beginning of his career Bavinck has held a broader notion of *wetenschap*, which did certainly strengthen his view of scientific theology.

Prior to explicating Bavinck's notion of scientific theology, his specific and perspicuous definition of science, as laid out in *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* volume 1, needs to be examined first.

> Every science that can claim the name and status of a science must have its own object that exists in the real world. There is, furthermore, an assumption that such an object is knowable, and that the science is, accordingly, bound to that object as rigorously as possible.[19]

According to this statement, science has three defining factors. First, science must have a real object. Although he rejects the positivistic view of science, Bavinck recognises the positive character of human knowledge, arguing that knowledge is attained by the perception of real things. He thus concedes that scientific knowledge is empirical, though 'humans do not confine their knowledge to the sensually perceptible things, but extend it to those that are invisible and

[18] Further on this, see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 32-37.
[19] *RD*, 1:90; *GD*, 1:66.

spiritual.'[20] From this it can be deduced that Bavinck insists on the reality of both the spiritual and natural worlds, the visible and invisible worlds, underlying which is God's creation out of nothing.[21] This articulation of the affinity of creation and science can be seen in Bavinck's early years. In 'Het voor en tegen van een Dogmatisch System' (The Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System) (1881), Bavinck writes:

> Thus, a scientific system may be nothing other than a reproduction in words, a translation into language, a description, a reflection in our consciousness, of the system present in things themselves. Science does not have to create and to fantasize, but only to describe what exists. *We contemplate what God has thought eternally beforehand and has given embodied form in the creation*.[22]

Clearly, the term "embodied form in the creation" conveys Bavinck's firm belief in realism. This means that science cannot be undertaken in separation from objective reality and with one's speculative reason alone, which will bring about disappointment and delusion.[23] In other words, this scientific view of objective reality puts an end to subjectivism and an incessantly metaphysical speculation.

This does not mean that Bavinck expels metaphysics from the domain of science. In repudiating positivism, he insists that the place of metaphysics in science must be retained.[24] *The preservation of metaphysics is predicated upon the second defining factor in Bavinck's account of science: all sciences begin with unproven and unprovable assumptions, which are concerned with human epistemic ability and the knowability of the objects of science*. Throughout their lives, Bavinck and Snouck Hurgronje differ dramatically in this regard (as we have their letters from 1874-1921, and they remain opposed). Snouck Hurgronje underscores the empirical approach to increasing knowledge and 'considers the scientific notions concerning the transcendental as unattainable.'[25] By contrast, Bavinck maintains that scientific research cannot get rid of philosophy and metaphysics insofar as all sciences are grounded on axioms that are metaphysically assumed.[26] He even describes science as a

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[20] *CW*, 44. Bavinck further differentiates empirical knowledge from scientific knowledge. The former is concerned with specific and isolated phenomena, whereas the latter seeks to know the general, the law that governs all, and the idea that inspires all; the former is satisfied with specific things, whereas the latter explores "why" through these things; the former focuses on practical interest and attempts to satisfy the demand of life, whereas the latter strives for something surpassing that and intends for the knowledge of truth. Bavinck further applies this difference to religion and theology; *CW*, 49.
[21] *RD*, 2:406-507; *GD*, 2:370-471.
[22] *PCDS*, 93; emphasis added.
[23] *CW*, 52.
[24] *RD*, 1:37; also see Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 91.
[25] "Snouck Hurgronje aan Bavinck, Weltevreden, 18 juni, 1895," de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 147.
[26] *CW*, 37.

philosophical notion that is acquired by human thinking.[27] This metaphysical character of science is clearly present in Bavinck's description of science in general. He argues:

> Science always has to do with the knowledge of causes. It does not rest in the *that* but seeks after the *wherefore*. Irrespective of whether it reaches this goal (all science is a knowing in part), this is the ideal that it keeps in sight and that it pursues with all its might. It is not satisfied with a dry summary of the phenomena but traces out *the universal in the particular, the substance in the phenomenon, the rule in the random, the idea in the real, and the logos in what exists*.[28]

As such, metaphysical thinking is indispensable to scientists in accomplishing their tasks.

Bavinck's metaphysical concern regarding presupposition in science hinges on his view of faith. That is to say, his presuppositionalism results from faith, not vice versa. This logical order is vital; otherwise, science would slip into subjectivism and ignore objective reality, as will be explained later. It should be clarified that Bavinck accords faith with both religious and epistemological significance.[29] With regard to science in a general sense, the intellectual function of faith is of considerable importance. Bavinck writes:

> Believing in general is a very common way in which people gain knowledge and certainty. In all areas of life we start by believing. Our natural inclination is to believe. It is only acquired knowledge and experience that teach us skepticism. *Faith is the foundation of society and the basis of science. Ultimately all certainty is rooted in faith*.[30]

It is evident that all knowledge and science, for Bavinck, should be acquired in faith, which brings with it the certainty of knowledge.

The knowledge acquired in such a way implies the twofold implication of faith. For Bavinck, 'the starting point of all human knowledge is sense perception.'[31] Accordingly, a fundamental presupposition in science, which runs through Bavinck's works, is a twofold faith, that is, the trustworthiness of our sense organs and the belief in the reality of the world.[32] 'Knowledge is the result of research. And for research, the belief that the object of research exists, that our sense organs do not deceive us, that we will be able to come to knowledge by

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[27] *CW*, 34.
[28] Herman Bavinck, "Herman Bavinck's *Religion and Theology*: A Translation," trans. Bruce Pass, *The Reformed Theological Review* 77, no. 2 (2018): 125; Herman Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid* (Wageningen: Vada, 1902), 54; emphatics added.
[29] *RD*, 1:568-571; *GD*, 1:536-542.
[30] *RD*, 1:566; *GD*, 1:534; emphasis added.
[31] *RD*, 1:226; *GD*, 1:199; also see *CW*, 18; Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," 108-109.
[32] See "Geloofswetenschap," 7; *WHG*, 32; *De Zekerheid des Geloofs*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1903), 59-60; Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 110.; *RD*, 1:569.

research, is necessary. Without that faith, there is no research or science.'[33] By faith, the hypotheses of science 'are accepted *a priori* and serve as starting point for all argumentation and proof.'[34] Hence, Bavinck maintains that all sciences begin with faith.[35]

The third decisive factor in Bavinck's view of science is its binding with the object investigated. This object-defining character denotes that an authentic science should be undertaken on its own, and has its own task and purpose. Unlike the view of Medieval Christianity, which defines the other sciences as handmaidens to and being dependent upon theology, Bavinck contends that, '[a]ll science has inherent value and purpose, apart from whether it has practical utility or yields benefits for life.'[36] He argues, for example, the natural sciences refer to sciences that have 'the entire cosmos as the object and the systematised knowledge of that as the purpose.'[37] Hence, the natural sciences seek to know 'what constitutes nature, what are its origin, its essence, and its end.'[38] Given this independence of every science, Bavinck opposes the positivistic view of science that religion and morality are dominated and replaced by empirical sciences. He insists that religion, morality and empirical sciences have their own laws and purposes.[39]

Bavinck moreover stresses that this object-defining character underlies the organic unity of science. In the discussion on natural science in *Christelijke Wetenschap*, Bavinck argues that the unity of science is the guarantee of the healthy development of its specialisation. All subjects of science have the same idea; the specialisation of subjects refers to the different application of this idea to the investigation of a particular object. This application is requisite insofar as the world is a unity that is characterised by diversity.[40] To put it in another way, the application of the common idea means various scientific explorations on the pertinent nature, law and character of the object, which is *de facto* to interpret the thoughts that have been laid down by God in His creation.[41] These thoughts were endowed by God in creation via the

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[33] Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 5.
[34] *RD*, 1:220-221; *GD*, 1:193; also see *WHG*, 18. Bavinck points out the same thing to Snouck Hurgonje in another letter. There Bavinck argues that in faith the theologian accepts the theological *a priori* and moves from the finite to the infinite; "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgonje, Kampen, 8 februari 1883," de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 111.
[35] *CWB*, 17; *CWV*, 34.
[36] *RD*, 1:53; *GD*, 1:30.
[37] *CW*, 58.
[38] Bavinck, "Christianity and Natural Science," 91.
[39] *CW*, 50. The third factor of Bavinck's view is reflective of the Kuyperian idea of sphere sovereignty. Chapter six will explicate the difference between Kuyper and Bavinck in this regard.
[40] *CW*, 59.
[41] *CW*, 58.

Logos.[42] In this light, Bavinck tackles the compatibility of unity and independence of sciences by the continuous sway of the Logos in creation. This compatibility is foundational to Bavinck's defence of the place of theology in the academy. He contends that '[i]n the university, both the unity of science and the independence and peculiarity of all particular sciences must come into its own.'[43] This compatibility of the unity and independence of sciences is further embodied in scientific methodology. Bavinck maintains that there is no alleged common method for all sciences.[44] A particular scientific method is largely dependent on the affinity between subject and object. This is because the task of all sciences is to account for the fact of the relationship between subject and object.[45] Hence, despite the unity of science, particular sciences could be distinguished from each other by their own qualities and methods.

In short, from the vantage point of this twofold view of science, Bavinck formulates a general definition of science, which stresses the reality of the object, the necessity of presumption and object-defining character. Later on, it will be demonstrated that this threefold factor is explicitly present in Bavinck's idea of theology as a science. Prior to this, we need first to examine Bavinck's view on theology itself.

III. Bavinck's Definitions of Dogma, Dogmatics and Theology

Bavinck begins his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* with a terminological study of dogma and dogmatics. Etymologically, Bavinck observes, the term "dogma" (δογμα) means 'that which is definite, that which has been decided, and is therefore fixed.' The notion that dogma refers to decree, decision and truth was espoused by early Christian writers.[46]

From this Bavinck deduces four implications of the word "dogma". First, dogma indicates the existence of a great deal of truths, commands, propositions and rules which are unquestioned. In theology, Bavinck argues, this unquestionableness of dogma consists in the principle that *Deus Dixit* ('God has said'), that is, the Word of God in Holy Scripture.[47] Second, dogma implies social function in that it is authoritative in a certain circle of people. Bavinck

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[42] *RD*, 1:231, 586; *GD*, 1:204-205, 555-556; *CW*, 37. The idea of the Logos is important to Bavinck in articulating the relationship between theology and the other sciences, as will be discussed in chapter six.
[43] *CW*, 59.
[44] *CW*, 60.
[45] *CWB*, 21; *CWV*, 38.
[46] *RD*, 1:28-29; *GD*, 1:3-4. Bavinck does not set out the names of these church fathers, but the fathers, including the likes of Origen and Cyril of Alexandria, clearly used the term "dogma" in their writings; cf Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus 1-16*, trans. Wayne Barkley, ed. Thomas P. Halton (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 8.11.6; Cyril of Alexandria, *Cyril of Alexandria, Letters 51–110*, ed. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 55.7, 61.4, 64.1, 67.1, 70.2.
[47] *RD*, 1:29-30; *GD*, 1:4-5.

associates this social character with the Church and its 'ministerial and declarative' confession. In this regard, he differentiates dogma *quoad se* and dogma *quoad nos*. The former refers to the given proposition that is objectively grounded in God's authority even without human recognition. By contrast, the latter means the dogma for us, which consists in the Church's confession.[48] As he has already written in 1881, 'a dogma is not a private opinion or an individual sentiment, but the faith-truth declared and confessed by the Christian Church as a whole or by one of its branches.'[49] Third, theological or religious dogma combines both divine authority and ecclesiastical confession. This means that dogma cannot be identified as the absolute divine truth on the one hand, and on the other hand that a religious person must perceive 'an unchanging and permanent element' in dogma.[50] Given this divine authority as conveyed through human work, dogmatics could be thought of as having a divine-human quality. In this sense, Bavinck contends that 'the definition of dogmatics … contains the idea that it sets forth the knowledge of God that is laid down in his Word *to the Church*.'[51] This reflects the divine-human character of dogmas, that is, that dogma is grounded in the Word of God but articulated by human beings. Hence, '[e]very dogmatics is not the word of God itself, but a human, fallible description of the word of God. It is not the original, but always more or less, never a perfectly similar image of the divine truth.'[52] Fourth, dogma has the dual sense that is both *narrow* and *broad*. In a *broader* sense, dogma 'denotes the Christian religion as a whole'; in a *narrower* sense, it refers to 'the articles of faith that were based on the Word of God and therefore obligated everyone to faith.' Following this dual sense, Bavinck defines dogmatics as 'the systems of the articles of faith.'[53] In this light, dogmatics encompasses the principle of *Deus Dixit*, an ecclesiastical and a confessional character, a divine-human quality, and the entirety of Christianity.

Generally, Bavinck uses the terms "dogmatics" and "theology" interchangeably.[54] Nonetheless, he accentuates that 'originally *dogmatics* was an adjective used to describe the main concept of theology.'[55] This means that, for Bavinck, the essential content of theology is

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[48] *RD*, 1:30-31; *GD*, 1:5-6.
[49] *PCDS*, 94.
[50] *RD*, 1:31-33; *GD*, 1:6-8.
[51] *RD*, 1:46; *GD*, 1:23. Bavinck hence stresses the significance of the knowledge of God conveyed to the Church in history. He wrote eleven volumes on the history of dogmatics which cover the centuries from the first to the nineteenth. However, it is regrettable that volumes 8-10 were lost. Herman Bavinck, "Geschiedenis der Dogmatiek," in *Herman Bavinck Archive* (Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Amsterdam), Box 15, Folder 160.
[52] Herman Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," *Theologische Studiën* 3 (1891): 268.
[53] *RD*, 1:33-34; *GD*, 1:8-9.
[54] For example, *RD*, 1:38; *GD*, 1:13.
[55] *RD*, 1:34; *GD*, 1:9; emphasis original.

dogmatics. 'The content of dogmatics is the knowledge of God as he has revealed it in Christ through his Word.'[56] As such, the principle of *Deus Dixit* underlies dogmatic theology.

An anticipatory critique of Bavinck's view of dogmatics and theology is that he seems to elevate dogmatics to such a high place that all other theological disciplines are subordinate or secondary to it. In particular, biblical theology—namely, theological study on the content of Holy Scripture—cannot be conceptualised without dogmatics. Bavinck argues that biblical theology, which 'stops at the words of Scripture', should be undertaken with the commitment to particular ecclesial confessions.[57] It seems that Bavinck thinks of biblical theology as descriptive rather than prescriptive. Contemporary biblical theologians must take issue with Bavinck. James Mead insists that 'the normative aspect of biblical theology ought not to be dismissed altogether, insofar as the biblical books contain implicit theological claims that readers who regard the Bible as authoritative would naturally seek.'[58] Even many contemporary dogmaticians disapprove Bavinck's point of view. Thomas F. Torrance (1913-2007) contends that dogmatics and biblical theology (studies) serve the Word of God together and are dedicated with a single end to the unfolding of the economy of God's revelation. Hence, they should be reconciled, coordinated but differentiated, and then construct a unity.[59] For Bavinck, as one who lived in the nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed world, Mead's and Torrance's arguments would be unimaginable. Indeed, how could the biblical theologian not read the Bible as a child of his time? Worth noting is that Bavinck's conception of biblical theology is not merely the result of his identity as a dogmatician. His intention is to combat alleged scientific neutrality, which is applied to religious science and strips theology of its confessional character.[60] For Bavinck, dogmatics is essential to theology, whose confessional character lays bare the fact that scientific theology always starts from somewhere.

Grounded on this dogmatic essence of theology, Bavinck takes issue with Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose dualistic philosophy of the noumenal and the phenomenal restrains

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[56] *RD*, 1:110; *GD*, 1:88.
[57] *RD*, 1:45, 82; *GD*, 1:21, 58-59; a helpful and concise analysis of Bavinck's view of biblical theology, see John Bolt, "Bavinck's Use of Wisdom Literature in Systematic Theology," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 11-17. Bavinck's subordination of biblical theology to dogmatics was taken over by his successor V. Hepp (1879-1950), see Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden*, 76.
[58] James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 9.
[59] T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 128-149; a helpful analysis of Torrance's view, see Gary W. Deddo, "T. F. Torrance on Theological and Biblical Studies as Co-Servants of the Word of God, Living and Written," in *Reconsidering the Relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology in the New Testament*, ed. Benjamin E. Reynolds, Brian Lugioyo, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 251-271.
[60] See *RD*, 1:245-249, 298-300; *GD*, 1:216-220, 270-272.

theology within the confines of experience. Eventually, Kant's philosophy grounds dogma in morality and personal faith. Bavinck observes that despite Schleiermacher's opposition to Kant's view of religion, the former aligns himself with the latter by the emphasis on religious feeling and thus renders dogmas only to be something subjective. Following this path, Bavinck argues, dogmatics after Kant and Schleiermacher becomes 'the account of the historic phenomenon that is called the Christian religion and manifests itself in a unique faith and doctrine.'[61] It is beyond doubt that Bavinck's arguments reflect his resolution to repudiate any effort to deviate theology from the knowledge of God, which one can perceive in the religious science at his time. This fundamental stance was established early on in the development of his theology. Therein, he criticised Schleiermacher as having led theology away from the knowledge of God, and religious science as being by no means aimed at the knowledge God.[62]

In the background of his oppositions to the various dogmatic tendencies since Kant and Schleiermacher is a constant desire to safeguard the scientific nature of theology. Immediately after the criticism of the dogmatic method of the historical account of Christianity, Bavinck writes: 'But it is science to do truth. If dogmatics intends to be real science, it is then not content with the account of what is but should point out what must count as truth. It should demonstrate not the *that* but the *cause*, not reality but truth, not the real but the ideal, the logical, the necessary.'[63] It suffices to say that Bavinck judges the historical account of Christianity as an unscientific theology. In his letter to Snouck Hurgronje, Bavinck argues that historical studies is a pre-study but never the goal of science.[64] A genuine scientific theology must be prescriptive rather than descriptive. As Bavinck argues, 'dogmatics is a normative science that prescribes what we must believe.'[65] In the end, he concludes the discourse on the dogmatic essence of scientific theology by saying that 'dogmatics is and cannot exist other than as the scientific system of the knowledge of God.'[66] It is within the context of this concern for the scientificity of theology that Bavinck's definition of scientific theology is laid out.

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[61] *RD*, 1:35-37; *GD*, 1:10-12.
[62] *WHG*, 14-15, 24-25.
[63] *GD*, 1:12; *RD*, 1:37; rev.
[64] "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, Kampen, 12 januari 1886," in de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 127. As mentioned earlier, Snouck Hurgronje stresses the empirical approach to knowing and opposes metaphysics. In some sense, Bavinck's negative estimation of historical studies is to repudiate such an empirical epistemology.
[65] *RD*, 1:46; *GD*, 1:22.
[66] *GD*, 1:13; *RD*, 1:38; rev.

IV. Bavinck's Project of Theology as the Science of God

A. Bavinck's Engagement with Julius Kaftan

In 1886, nine years before the publication of the first edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Bavinck visited the University of Berlin and audited Kaftan's lecture on the distinction between the *gewöhnliche* and the *wissenschaftliche* knowledge.[67] In Bavinck's lengthy discourse on scientific theology, Julius Kaftan (1848-1926) is the main interlocutor. This engagement with Kaftan, which takes up some pages in the Dutch edition, was added by Bavinck to the second edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. It should be noted that Bavinck has already engaged with Kaftan in the first edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* by several references to Kaftan's *Die Wahrheid der Christlichen Religion* (1888), *Das Wesen der Christlichen Religion* (1881), and 'Glaube und Dogmatik' (1891). In the preface to the second edition, Bavinck concedes that 'recent published literature' is 'consulted and incorporated', but he does not enumerate the titles. However, the addition of the engagement with Kaftan's *Dogmatik* and 'Zur Dogmatik' in the second edition does not merely aim to keep pace with theological scholarship. In the preface, Bavinck also mentions that 'many expressions are altered or clarified' as responses to the comments on the first edition. In the Dutch edition, the addition of Kaftan's latest works forms three new sections.[68] Evidently, Bavinck believes that an analysis of Kaftan's dogmatics can sharpen his own project of scientific theology, responding to the critiques of the first edition, including those by Snouck Hurgronje.

Kaftan was born in Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. After receiving his education at universities of Erlangen, Berlin, and Kiel, he took the post of associate professor of systematic theology at University of Basel in 1873. He was granted a full professorship there in 1881. Two years later, he became the professor of apologetics and the philosophy of religion at the University of Berlin. Along with Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922) and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), Kaftan is a prominent Ritschlian theologian.

In spite of his emphatic rejection of the theology of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89), Bavinck engages with Kaftan's view of dogmatics both critically and eclectically.[69] He begins the

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[67] Herman Bavinck, 'Ex animo et corpore,' in *Herman Bavinck Archive* (Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Amsterdam), Box 13, Folder 16, the journal entry on 26 Juli 1886.

[68] *GD*, 1:13-23; cf. *RD*, 1:38-46. In the first Dutch edition, after the conclusion that dogmatics is the scientific system of the knowledge of God, Bavinck immediately moves on to shed light on the encyclopaedic place of theology; Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Eerste deel, Eerste druk* (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1895), 9.

[69] On Bavinck's criticism of Ritschl's theology, see Herman Bavinck, "De Theologie van Albrecht Ritschl," *Theologische Studiën* 6 (1888): 369-403; "The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl," trans. John Bolt, *TBR* 3 (2012):

demonstration of the scientific nature of theology by pointing out the commonality of various objections to dogmatics as the scientific system of the knowledge of God: 'All of these objections come down to saying that the object of dogmatics is not the knowledge of God but the content of faith, that dogmatics is not a science, and that it can never be made into a system.'[70] A tentative judgment can be made that Bavinck's ensuing analysis of Kaftan's project of dogmatics is intended to affirm the scientificity of theology—that is, dogmatics is to do with the knowledge of God and can be articulated as a scientific system.

With reference to Kaftan's *Dogmatik* and the articles on dogmatics—'Zur Dogmatik'—as published in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, Bavinck argues that Kaftan is the most prominent dogmatician who sides with the aforementioned objections. He summarises the character of Kaftan's dogmatics in three aspects. First, grounded on the authority of revelation, dogmatics is prescriptive and normative of the Christian faith, which is real knowledge and thus includes the knowledge of God.[71] For Kaftan, this normativity is continuous in the Christian faith. 'The [Christian's] faith originates in the Word of God (revelation) and exists as this revelation of God is living to him at present.'[72] Only on the basis of the authority of revelation can the Christian faith be spoken of in an absolute tone.[73] Moreover, the object of the faith is none other than God. 'The whole doctrine of faith is hence in a certain sense nothing but the doctrine of God, the doctrine of his eternal essence and his attributes, the doctrine of his revelation and activity in the world.'[74] Second, dogma is the expression of faith which is religious-moral rather than intellectual and scientific. Although faith is the knowledge of God, 'dogmatics is not the science of God' insofar as '[faith] is not scientific and demonstrable but gained through personal experience by the activity of the moral will.'[75] In this light, 'dogmatics belongs to ethics.'[76] As Kaftan writes, '[t]his faith is knowing itself. But it is knowing of its own kind, which is in peculiar inner relations that comes about only by human learning to obey

123-63. A helpful analysis of Bavinck's critique of Ritschl, see Mark W. Elliott, "Bavinck's Use of Augustine as an Antidote to Ritschl," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 24-40.

[70] *RD*, 1:38; *GD*, 1:13.

[71] *RD*, 1:38; *GD*, 1:13-14; cf. Julius Kaftan, "Zur Dogmatik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 13, no. 2 (1903): 115.

[72] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1903)," 109. German original: 'Der Glaube entsteht durch das Wort Gottes (die Offenbarung) und besteht, indem ihm diese Offenbarung Gottes lebendig gegenwärtig ist.'

[73] *Ibid*., 118; cf. *RD*, 1:38.

[74] Julius Kaftan, "Zur Dogmatik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 14, no. 2 (1904): 153. German original: 'Die ganze Glaubenslehre ist daher in gewissem Sinn nichts als Lehre von Gott, von seinem ewigen Wesen und seinen Eigenschaften, von seiner Offenbarung und Betätigung in der Welt.'

[75] *RD*, 1:39-40; *GD*, 1:15. Kaftan also argues elsewhere that dogmatics is essentially ethical and must comprises moral ideal; Julius Kaftan, *The Truth of the Christian Religion*, trans. George Ferries, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1894), 1:34-36.

[76] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1903)," 115.

God. It is this close connection with the personal life that significantly matters in faith and faith-knowledge.'[77] Plainly, the religious-moral character of faith asserted by Kaftan is rooted in piety.[78] Thus, as George Foster has noted, there should be 'a complete transformation of dogmatics,' that is, a transformation 'from being a science of *God* and of his relations to the world' to 'a science of the Christian faith.'[79]

Bavinck commends Kaftan's contributions, arguing that what deserve orthodox theologians' appreciation is Kaftan's emphasis on the epistemological significance of faith, the authority of revelation and God as the object of faith-knowledge. He thus argues that 'at first blush it surprises us that orthodoxy did not accord this dogmatics a more favourable welcome than in fact it did.'[80] Nonetheless, he points out two vital defects of Kaftan's dogmatics, which could account for the opposition of orthodoxy. First, Kaftan differentiates Christian knowledge of God from the scientific knowledge of the world.[81] This differentiation is grounded on the religious-moral character of the Christian faith. Kaftan endorses a mediating method and considers theology as separated from science. His purpose is to avoid subordinating Christianity to natural science.[82] For Bavinck, Kaftan's model of independence is not unfamiliar. In Bavinck's day, the Groninger school in the Netherlands cut off Christian faith from science by laying emphasis on religious feeling.[83] Moreover, it is not difficult to find that the Dutch parallel of Kaftan's model is Chantepie de la Saussaye's ethical theology, which associates truth with the life and conscience of the Christian and maintains the essence of the Christian faith as its ethical manifestations.[84] To be sure, Bavinck's notion of twofold *wetenschap* definitely rejects this dualistic approach, which undermines the unity of science. In 'De Theologie van Albrecht Ritschl' (1888), he has already indicated that Ritschl's theology is characterised by Kant's differentiation between the noumenal and the phenomenal, which leads to 'the radical disjunction between religion and science, between a theoretical and religious worldview.'[85]

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[77] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1903)," 121. German original: 'Dieser Glaube ist selbst ein Erkennen. Aber ein Erkennen seiner Art, das in eigentümlichen inneren Beziehungen steht, das nur zustandekommt, indem der Mensch Gott gehorchen lernt. Es ist dieser enge Zusammenhang mit dem persönlichen Leben, auf den es beim Glauben und bei der Glaubenserkenntnis in entscheidender Weise ankommt.'
[78] *Ibid*., 101. Kaftan concedes that this view is under sway of Schleiermacher's theology.
[79] George B. Foster, "Kaftan's Dogmatik," *The American Journal of Theology* II, no. 4 (1898): 815.
[80] *RD*, 1:41; *GD*, 1:16.
[81] *RD*, 1:40; *GD*, 1:16.
[82] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1904)," 172, 174.
[83] See chapter 2, III.A.
[84] See chapter 2, III.C.
[85] Bavinck, "The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl," 135.

Bavinck's second criticism of Kaftan's view of dogmatics is of greater importance. He avers that Kaftan mistakenly presents the relation between faith and theology. Granted that faith is the organ of knowledge rather than the source, Bavinck disagrees with Kaftan that 'revelation must also—even if not exclusively—consist in the making known of truth, in communicating the thoughts of God; it is not only manifestation but also inspiration, not only deed-revelation but also word-revelation.'[86] As such, Bavinck's eclectic attitude toward Kaftan comes to the fore. For him, Kaftan's emphasis on religious-moral character of the Christian faith needs be retained. Added to this is the intellectual character, which is essential to a scientific enterprise. This means that the knowledge of God consists not only in faith but also in external divine revelation. This objective knowledge of God is appropriated by faith. Hence, God cannot be investigated by the method of natural science; God is instead known in His self-revelation in deeds and words.[87] Bavinck maintains that 'without God's acts the words would be empty, without his words the acts would be blind.'[88]

Given this cognitive function of faith and the pre-existence of the knowledge of God to faith, Bavinck maintains that a system of theology or dogmatics is attainable.[89] Here, he targets Kaftan's renouncement of everything that pertains to the notions of system and systematic construction.[90] For Bavinck, one goal of scientific theology is to construct a unity of the knowledge of God. Moreover, he observes that due to an incorrect view of science, Kaftan articulates a mistaken relation between dogmatics and faith.[91] Although Bavinck does not delve into Kaftan's definition of science, it can be perceived in the latter's writings that the word "science" (*Wissenschaft*) cannot be used to refer to the study of invisible or unperceivable things.[92] Following this, rather than the objective knowledge of God, the human faith-knowledge (*Glaubenserkenntnis*), which is primarily the knowledge of God, is the object of human reflections.[93] In the concluding estimation, Bavinck identifies Kaftan's project of dogmatics as subjectivist, which is preoccupied with 'the religious experience of the subject.' Both Kaftan's recognition of the knowledge of God and rejection of the science of God prove

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[86] *RD*, 1:41; *GD*, 1:17.
[87] *RD*, 1:41-42; *GD*, 1:17-18.
[88] *RD*, 1:366; *GD*, 1:336. Here Bavinck draws on Geerhardus Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard Gaffin (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001), 10.
[89] *RD*, 1:42; *GD*, 1:18.
[90] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1903)," 96.
[91] *RD*, 1:42; *GD*, 1:18.
[92] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1903)," 102; "Dogmatik (1904)," 172.
[93] Kaftan, "Dogmatik (1904)," 150. Cf. *RD*, 1:42; *GD*, 1:18.

his alignment with neo-Kantianism.[94] Bavinck's estimation corresponds with the general features of neo-Kantianism as described by Christopher Adair-Toteff, who posits that most neo-Kantians oppose systematic construction as futile; meanwhile, they recognise the value of empiricism and reject materialism and scepticism.[95] It is explicit that the neo-Kantian slogan, *Zurück zu Kant*, forces Kaftan to espouse the dualism that the knowledge of God is unattainable in the phenomenal world. In order to avoid Kaftan's subjectivism and neo-Kantianism, therefore, Bavinck argues in an eclectic way that with the endorsement of Kaftan's view of faith-knowledge, one should further assert that '[p]recisely because a true faith-knowledge of God exists, dogmatics has the knowledge of God as part of its content and can rightly claim to be a science.'[96]

Before the elaboration on theology as the science of God, Bavinck clarifies that he does not belittle the subjective aspect of scientific theology. He recognises that 'the subjectivity and personality of the scientific investigator play a larger role.' For example, science involves human perception. This subjective aspect of science underlies that God's self-revelation can be appropriated by humans and serve for scientific study of theology.[97] On the one hand, Bavinck's affirmation of human subjectivity corresponds to his insistence on the confessional character of dogmatics and theology. How could a church confession be articulated without human subjective involvement? On the other hand, implied in Bavinck's clarification here is his intention to maintain the correspondence between the subject and object of scientific theology, which reflects the universal authority of dogma. He contends that '[u]niversals are not "after the fact" [*post rem*] as empiricism maintains; nor are universals "before the fact" [*ante rem*] as rationalism dreams. Rather, they are "in the fact," [*in re*] and then in both the subject and the object.'[98] For Bavinck, this correspondence is grounded in God's creation and maintained by the Logos, as will be spelled out in the next chapter.

On the basis of what has been stated above, the purpose of Bavinck's engagement with Kaftan can be summed up in three points. First, science cannot be understood in an empiristic

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[94] *RD*, 1:42-43; *GD*, 1:18-19.
[95] Christopher Adair-Toteff, "Neo-Kantianism: The German Idealism Movement," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870–1945*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28. Adair-Toteff also points out another general features of neo-Kantianism: 'while there is a tendency to see Neo-Kantianism as primarily a movement that emphasised problems of knowledge, this is to ignore the fact that many of the movement's members were active in looking at social questions; indeed, a number made the attempt to right social, political, and religious wrongs.' Bavinck also critiques neo-Kantianism as being grounded on empiricism and hostile to philosophical system; see *RD*, 1:557, 609
[96] *RD*, 1:43; *GD*, 1:19. Recent Bavinck studies demonstrates that eclecticism is characteristic of Bavinck's theological methodology; Brock and Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism," 310-332.
[97] *RD*, 1:43; *GD*, 1:19.
[98] Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," 114.

way alone. This has already been emphatically repudiated by Bavinck's notion of twofold *wetenschap*. Without a doubt, a broader conception of science functions as the precondition to scientific theology. Second, faith is decisive in articulating a scientific theology. Both in soteriological and epistemological senses, faith is essential to the science of God. Third, a healthy correspondence between the subject and object of scientific theology is demanded, which denotes the truth that the knowledge of God is not only subjective faith-knowledge but also the objective knowledge consisting in God's self-revelation. In some sense, Kaftan's view of dogmatics is the example deployed by Bavinck to indicate these key respects of scientific theology.

B. Bavinck's Definition of Scientific Theology

As mentioned in the beginning, while speaking of theology as a science, Bavinck always has in mind the notion of science in general. Hence, it is helpful to pause here to recap the three key points of science in general after the lengthy discourse above and before unfolding Bavinck's definition of scientific theology. On the basis of the notion of twofold science (the science of the visible things and that of the invisible things), Bavinck describes science in general with three essential factors: the reality of the object of investigation, the acceptance of unproven and unprovable presuppositions in faith, and its object-defining character.

Having set out the definition of science in general, Bavinck applies these three factors to dogmatics immediately. He writes: 'For dogmatics the requirements are identical: it must have its own object; the object must be knowable; and it is strictly bound to that object.'[99] Note that Bavinck's view of these three factors of scientific dogmatics does not burst into view. His unambiguous definition of scientific theology has already been formulated many pages earlier.

> Theology as a particular science *assumes* that God has revealed Himself in an apparent way in religion or, more specifically, in Christianity; in other words, it *assumes the existence, the revelation and the knowability of God* and therefore *proceeds from a highly significant dogma*.[100]

Suffice it to say that these three factors are innate to Bavinck's definition of scientific theology. Hence, scientific theology is a particular kind of *wetenschap*. Theology and the other sciences are congeneric. The parallel of theology with the other sciences strengthened Bavinck's opposition to the substitution of religious science for theology in the Dutch universities of his day. Meanwhile, this parallel relentlessly repudiates any attempt that is taken to subordinate

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[99] *RD*, 1:90; *GD*, 1:66.
[100] *GD*, 1:13; *RD*, 1:37-38; rev.; emphasis added.

theology to the standards of natural science. In other words, this parallel undergirds Bavinck's criticism of Opzoomer and Scholten, who deploy the criteria of the natural sciences in theological studies and then seek for the truth about God in the visible world.[101]

a. God as the Real Object

Bavinck argues that scientific theology has its own real object, that is, the God who is known in His revelation. 'Theology was the knowledge of God. The object of theology was God himself, as he had made himself known to people in nature and grace. The whole discipline of theology was unfolded and ordered from this principle.'[102] As will be explicated later, Bavinck considers the doctrine of God as a higher dogma in which scientific theology is rooted. It is explicit that Bavinck's engagement with Kaftan serves to clarify this aspect. It is not faith-knowledge but God Himself that is the object of scientific theology.

By insisting on God as the object of theology, Bavinck repudiates the view of theology as a historical description of Christian religion, Christian faith and doctrines, as commonly described by thinkers after Kant and Schleiermacher. As noted earlier, Bavinck believes that Kant's and Schleiermacher's influences on dogmatics divert the tendency of theological studies of Protestant orthodoxy. That is, Kant's dualism restrains theology within the confines of the phenomenal world so that God can never be the real object of theology. For Schleiermacher, '[t]heology is a positive science, the parts of which join into a cohesive whole only through their common relation to a distinct mode of faith, that is, a distinct formation of God-consciousness.'[103] This distinct mode of faith or formation of God-consciousness is related to linguistic and cultural elements; hence, theology must refer to the historical data which became diverse in the course of history.[104] Both Kant and Schleiermacher lay the emphasis on the phenomenal world so as to undermine the scientificity of theology that has God, who is in the noumenal world, as its object. Thus, as Eglinton observes, 'writing post-Enlightenment, Bavinck is required to justify his epistemological foundations in a way that Calvin never was.'[105] For Calvin, as Bavinck argues, '[t]he Gospel is at the same time the source of our knowledge of God and the means of grace.'[106] This means that for Calvin, that God be

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[101] See chapter 2, III.
[102] Bavinck, "Theology and Religious Studies," trans. Harry Boonstra in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 50.
[103] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, 3rd ed., ed. Terrence N. Tice (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 1.
[104] *Ibid.*, 2-3.
[105] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 91.
[106] Bavinck, "John Calvin," 67.

maintained as the object of theology is beyond questioned. For him, 'both conceptually and spiritually the knowledge of God has an involvement with the physical and sensory … The Spirit is not in opposition to the material, the external, but dwells in it, uses it and stimulates man from all sides to permit himself to be taken along.'[107] By contrast, rather than considering God as the object of theology directly, post-Kantian theologians have to wrestle with the chasm between the noumenal and the phenomenal.[108]

Bavinck, moreover, deploys the argument that God is the real object of theology to reject the subordination of theology to religious science. In his view, what is pursued in religious science is not the knowledge of God but rather the knowledge of various religions of all peoples and in all ages.[109] Indeed, Bavinck's critique would be repudiated by many practitioners of religious studies nowadays. Contemporary religious studies is involved with various views of gods in different religions.[110] Nonetheless, the core of Bavinck's criticism is still telling. For him, the science of religion at his time methodologically took a bottom-up approach to dealing with religion. This approach is untenable insofar as the idea of revelation is common and essential to all religions.[111] In other words, the idea of revelation proves that religion can only be comprehended by the top-down approach.

Despite the challenges posed by the Enlightenment, Bavinck is never embarrassed by placing God as the real object of theology. He is not perplexed, for example, by the anthropologised theology of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72). In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach argues that the human ideal is the consequence of the projection of human consciousness. God is the very human ideal, that is, the projected human nature – what we really want and aspire to do.[112] Thus, as Alister McGrath observes, the central and foundational idea of *The Essence of Christianity* is: 'human beings have created the gods, who embody their own idealized conception of their aspirations, needs and fears.'[113] Bavinck responds to Feuerbach's philosophy in the first and second volume of *Reformed Dogmatics* respectively.

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[107] Cornelis van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Knowing God*, trans. Donald Mader (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 199.
[108] On the epistemological transition in the post-Enlightenment era, see van der Kooi, *As in a Mirror*, 225-248; Yaroslav Viazovski, *Image and Hope: John Calvin and Karl Barth on Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2015), 119-129.
[109] *WHG*, 24-25.
[110] Cf. Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24-34.
[111] *RD*, 1:284-286; *PR*, 159-160.
[112] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-3.
[113] Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 68.

First, in response to Feuerbach and those who consider God as the product of human wishes, Bavinck puts forward five questions, the first of which is: 'But why, one may ask, are human beings not content with the forces present in nature?'[114] Bavinck's second response to Feuerbach could be considered as the supplement to the first one. Having offered a detailed analysis of various forms of philosophical agnosticism, including Feuerbach's atheism, Bavinck contends that the fundamental reason for the opposition to the knowability of God is that '[h]uman beings are bound to sense perception and always derive the material of thought from the visible world. They do not see the spiritual and cannot elevate themselves to the world of invisible things, inasmuch as they always remain bound to space and time.'[115] For Bavinck, the vital issue of Feuerbach's philosophy is its ignorance of the invisible world. By recognising the science of invisible things, Bavinck underscores his refutation of Feuerbach's anthropologisation of theology.[116]

b. Assumptions in Faith

The second factor of scientific theology is the assumptions of God's existence, self-revelation and knowability.[117] None of these hypotheses can be proved but rather must be accepted as *a priori* by faith. By insisting on the significance of hypotheses, Bavinck purposefully repudiates alleged scientific neutrality.[118] However, this claim would entail two questions. (1) By saying that theology begins with hypothesis, does Bavinck run the risk of making theology a product of fantasy? (2) How does Bavinck describe the role of faith in articulating scientific theology? Essentially, these two questions are interrelated.

The first question could be answered by Bavinck's critique of positivism. He argues that the philosophical foundation of positivism is that our knowledge is acquired through sensual perception and experience. This means that all positivistic sciences assume without proof the reliability of sensual perceptions and the objectivity of the perceived world.[119] However, positivistic science falls short of its capacity of exploring what is beyond human sensual perception, such as the essence and cause of things. Given this incompetence, therefore, Bavinck judges that '[p]ositivism leaves room for all sorts of alleged compensation of religion,

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[114] *RD*, 1:274; *GD*, 1:248. The questions raised by Bavinck are following his reference to C. P. Tiele, who argues humans have the Infinite within themselves; Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2:229-230, 233. Bavinck's response to Feuerbach is more or less under the sway of Tiele's religious science.
[115] *RD*, 2:46-47; *GD*, 2:20.
[116] Interestingly, Bavinck employed Feuerbachian terms in critiquing the Higher Education Act (1876) and the Leiden Modern school; *WHG*, 25; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 138.
[117] Also see *CW*, 76-77.
[118] *RD*, 1:298-300; *GD*, 1:270-272.
[119] *CW*, 35.

for a cult of humanity, for a reverence of dead spirits, for an altar for the unrecognised God, even for a service of Satan.'[120] On the one hand, this means that positivism cannot be applied to religion exclusively; otherwise, religion would fade away. On the other hand, as positivistic science assumes the reality of the perceived world, scientific theology presupposes the reality of the unperceived world, which has been unveiled in God's revelation in nature and grace. Hence, Bavinck stresses God's revelation in religion, particularly in Christianity. 'As science never precedes life, but always follows it and flows from it, so the science of the knowledge of God rests on the reality of his revelation.'[121] Bavinck's parallel of scientific theology with the other sciences serves to reinforce the fact that all sciences should hold fast to realism.

This parallel leads to the conclusion that scientific theology is as rooted in faith as the other sciences are. This viewpoint has been established in the beginning of Bavinck's theological career. In 'Geloofswetenschap' (1880), Bavinck writes: 'faith always says: [God] is indeed there; investigating further and deeper, you will finally find Him and see that God is the Hypothesis, on which all things rest and without which nothing can be explained finally.'[122] Clearly, faith and hypothesis are inseparable in theological studies. At this point, one needs to recall Bavinck's view of the epistemological function of faith, which is associated with God's revelation. He writes: 'all faith … includes a certain kind of knowing. And this knowledge is not produced but accepted by faith.'[123] With this in mind, Bavinck argues that the bond of faith and the hypothesis is attested by the Word of God, that is, Holy Scripture: '[Holy Scripture] states that all knowledge of God comes to us from his revelation and that we on our own part cannot appropriate its content except by a sincere and childlike faith.'[124] Explicitly, for Bavinck, the solid ground of faith in assumptions of God's revelation, existence and knowability is nothing other than the Word of God. Therefore, by saying that theology begins with hypothesis, Bavinck does not make theology a product of fantasy. Rather, Holy Scripture is the foundation and guarantee of these assumptions insofar as God the Hypothesis has revealed Himself in the Word of God.

The answer to the first question leads to the solution to the second. For Bavinck, revelation is the *principium externum* of theology, and faith is the *principium internum*. Specifically, Bavinck insists that Holy Scripture, where God has revealed Himself, is the sole *principium*

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[120] *CW*, 24.
[121] *PR*, 24.
[122] Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 12.
[123] *RD*, 1:52-53; *GD*, 1:30.
[124] *RD*, 1:209-210; *GD*, 1:181.

externum of theology, and *believing reason* is the only *principium internum*.[125] Interestingly, Bavinck describes faith as believing reason. Again, the intellectual character of faith is heightened here. Meanwhile, this designation is also concerned with the fact that faith is generated by revelation in which the knowledge of God is communicated.[126] For Bavinck, the correspondence between the external *principium* and the internal *principium* is indispensable to scientific theology. Bavinck was probably made aware of the significance of *principium* when he was the minister of the Christian Reformed congregation in Franeker from 1881 to 1882. In a letter to his friend Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje from that period, Bavinck indicated that in editing the sixth edition of *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, his theology underwent a great influence. He started to explore the fundamental principles (*Prinzipienlehre*) of theology, which he had not learned in Leiden.[127] If it would be an exaggeration to say that Bavinck's theology was transformed thoroughly, it must be convincing that *Synopsis* afforded Bavinck a great deal of fresh and essential theological insights that served for his articulation of scientific theology. This can be seen that the first disputation of *Synopsis* begins with Holy Scripture as the *principium* of theology, and sheds light on the notions of *principium essendi* and *principium cognitionis*.[128] By arguing for "assumptions in faith", Bavinck takes in the theology of *Synopsis* and considers faith as the *principium internum* of scientific theology. Nonetheless, one will continue to ask: How does faith function in scientific theology specifically?

In terms of theological method, faith is the subjective organ in human beings that appropriates the objective revelation of God.[129] This appropriation can be accomplished on the ground that '[t]he Holy Spirit is the great and powerful witness to Christ, objectively in Scripture, subjectively in the very hearts of human beings.'[130] More specifically,

> it is the Logos himself who through our spirit bears witness to the Logos in the world. It is the one selfsame Spirit who *objectively* displays the truth to us and *subjectively* elevates it into certainty in our spirit. It is his witness given in *our consciousness* to the thoughts God embodied in the creatures around us. … All cognition of truth is essentially a witness that the human spirit bears to it and at bottom a witness of the Spirit of God to the Word, by whom all things are made.[131]

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[125] *RD*, 1:88; *GD*, 1:64.
[126] *RD*, 1:91.
[127] "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, Franeker, 7 maart 1882," in de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 100.
[128] Te Velde, *Synopsis of a Purer Theology, Volume 1*, 30-39.
[129] *RD*, 1:504-505; *GD*, 1:469-470.
[130] *RD*, 1:506; *GD*, 1:471. Bavinck designates the Holy Spirit the *principium cognoscendi internum*.
[131] *RD*, 1:587; *GD*, 1:557.

The cooperation of the Logos and the Holy Spirit guarantees that scientific theology is not subjectivist by virtue of faith. It encompasses a correspondence between what objectively exists and a subjective consciousness, which is requisite for all science.[132]

Hendrikus Berkhof offers the critique that for Bavinck faith is merely an 'intellectual assent and submission to Scripture.'[133] At the first glance, the assumptions of God's existence, self-revelation and knowability seem to denote that faith is merely intellectual. However, Bavinck contends that faith is both intellectual and religious; moreover, these two dimensions of faith are interrelated. Bavinck maintains that faith is not exhausted by the intellectual sense on the ground that 'it also includes a heartfelt trust in a total surrender to God, who has revealed himself in Christ, and a personal appropriation of the promises extended in the gospel.'[134] This means that in faith the assumptions of God's existence, self-revelation and knowability indicate that scientific theology should be bound up with the object, God, not only intellectually but also personally. Scientific theologians must undertake theology in their personal relationship with God. In this regard, Bavinck is not unique but finds resonances in other modern theologians. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) argues, for example, that '*[t]heologia sacra*—it originates in prayerful kneeling before the mystery of the divine child in the stable.'[135] By the same token, Karl Barth (1886-1968) writes: 'in its totality [theological work] is peculiar and characteristic of theology that it can be performed only in the act of prayer.'[136] Evidently, both Bonhoeffer and Barth are in alliance with Bavinck with respect to the significance of one's personal faith and spirituality in theological studies. All that has stated above leads to the third factor of scientific theology.

c. Divine Object-Defining

According to Bavinck, the third decisive factor of scientific theology is that it 'proceeds from a highly significant dogma', which denotes that it is bound up with its object, God. The third factor is closely associated with the previous two. If God is the real object of theology, and if God's existence, self-revelation and knowability are assumed in faith, the whole project of scientific theology must be predicated on God.

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[132] *RD*, 1:564; *GD*, 1:532. Bavinck argues that a subjective consciousness is indispensable to science; 'without consciousness the whole world is dead for us.'
[133] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology*, 114.
[134] *RD*, 1:569; *GD*, 1:537.
[135] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940*, trans. Claudia D. Bergmann et al., ed. Dirk Schulz and Victoria J. Barnett, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 15 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 528.
[136] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 160.

The divine object-defining hallmark of scientific theology consists in the fact that theology stems from nothing other than the knowledge of God. As Bavinck writes,

> the knowledge of God is the only dogma, the exclusive content, of the entire field of dogmatics. All the doctrines treated in dogmatics … are but the explication of the one central dogma of the knowledge of God. All things are considered in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as the starting point. Dogmatics is always called upon to ponder and describe God and God alone, whose glory is in creation and re-creation, in nature and grace, in the world and in the church.[137]

From this quotation, it can be inferred that the knowledge of God as the highest dogma dominates scientific theology.[138] All *loci* of scientific theology should be governed by this dogma. This is reminiscent of Bavinck's organic motif, which stresses that organism is bound by a common idea.[139] Considering scientific theology as an organism, the dogma of the knowledge of God is the common idea that combines and incorporates the other dogmas into one big entirety. This thinking is clearly present in Bavinck's 'Confessie en Dogmatiek' (Confession and Dogmatics):

> This knowledge [of God], as revealed by God Himself in nature and Scripture, was the midpoint and the organic principle of the entire dogmatics. Thus, everything belonging in this science, directly or indirectly, straight or obliquely, was connected with the knowledge of God, out of which the dogmatic material was organised into a more or less ordered system.[140]

What is more, the dominant place of the dogma of the knowledge of God indicates that scientific theology is the ectype of God's self-knowledge. Bavinck writes:

> The relation of God's self-knowledge to our knowledge of God used to be expressed by saying that *the former was archetypal theology and the latter ectypal theology*. Our knowledge of God is the imprint of the knowledge that God has of himself but always in a creaturely sense. The knowledge of God in his creatures is only a weak likeness, a finite, limited sketch, of God's absolute self-consciousness accommodated to the human or creaturely consciousness. But however great the

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[137] *RD*, 2:29; *GD*, 2:2.
[138] Bavinck's view of the knowledge of God as the highest dogma will be detailed in chapter 4, III.B.
[139] *CWB*, 57; *CWV*, 79-80. The organic rationale of Bavinck's scientific theology will be explained in chapter four in detail.
[140] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 273-274. Dutch original: 'Die kennis, door God van zichzelven in natuur en Schrift geopenbaard, was het middelpunt en het organisch beginsel der gansche dogmatiek. In deze wetenschap behoorde dus alwat rechtstreeks of zijdelings, in casu recto vel obliquo, met die kennis van God samenhing. En vandaar uit werd dan de dogmatische stof in een min of meer geordend systeem georganiseerd.'

> distance is, the *principium essendi* of our knowledge of God is solely God himself, who reveals himself freely, self-consciously, and genuinely.[141]

This means that whether scientific theology stands or falls is determined by God; it is not identified with God's self-knowledge. Bavinck's conjoining of scientific theology and the idea of archetype-ectype is reflective of the Reformed scholastic appropriation of Thomistic terms.[142] Moreover, the ectype of God's self-knowledge echoes the second implication of the term "dogma", that is, the divine-human character, as stated earlier. Hence, one significant task of scientific theology is to expound the Christian faith under the guidance of the highest dogma. This is clearly embodied in Bavinck's sentiment: 'All things are considered in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as the starting point.'[143]

This divine object-defining character of scientific theology undergirds the independence of theology as the science of God. We should pause here to recall Bavinck's principle of "no common method for all sciences" in his definition of science in general. Methodologically, theology as a science must be independent of the other sciences. This is also the reason why Bavinck firmly objects to replacing theology with the science of religion.[144] More than the methodological reason, however, the independence of theology is ultimately grounded in the truth: 'Science exists also for God's sake and finds its *final goal* in his glory. Specifically, this then is true of theology; in a special sense it is *from God* and *by God*, and hence *for God* as well.'[145] What is explicit in this statement is the unique ultimate goal of theology, that is, to glorify God. On the other hand, this ultimate goal lays bare the impotence of the other sciences to realise their final goal. In view of this, Bavinck argues that theology is the Queen of sciences; theology finds the particular ultimate goal to which all sciences are directed.[146] Now that the other sciences cannot find their final goal anywhere other than in theology, they should not dominate theology or transform it according to their own methodologies. Without a doubt, by the ultimate goal of scientific theology, Bavinck resolutely rejects the approach of Dutch theological modernism to subjecting theology to the criteria of natural science, as described in chapter two.

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[141] *GD*, 1:184; *RD*, 1:212; rev; emphasis added. Also see *WHG*, 29. Bavinck's view of archetypal-ectypal theology reflects the influence of the definitions of archetypal and ectypal theologies in *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*; te Velde, *Synopsis of a Purer Theology, Volume 1*, 33.
[142] Chapter one, III.B.a.
[143] *RD*, 2:29; *GD*, 2:2.
[144] Cf. *RD*, 1:48-49; *CW*, 73-5; *WHG*, 24-25.
[145] *RD*, 1:53; *GD*, 1:31.
[146] *RD*, 1:54; *GD*, 1:31; *WHG*, 48. This point will be unpacked in chapter six, IV.B.

What is more, the ultimate goal of scientific theology is again reminiscent of Bavinck's organic motif, which accentuates the definite *telos* of organism.[147] In terms of theology, the only *telos* is none other than God, which is clearly manifest in "from God", "by God" and "for God". This theocentric goal reveals that scientific theology is not only to lay out the knowledge of God but is also essentially devotional and doxological. On the one hand, scientific theology is devotional insofar as it is theocentric through and through. This means that scientific theology cannot be achieved unless relying on God's grace and being committed to His revelation humbly. In this light, the devotional character is associated closely with faith. As has been demonstrated earlier, faith refers not only to the intellectual assent to God's revelation but also to personal relationship with the God who revealed Himself in grace and nature. Hence, as Bavinck notes, '[t]heology is ultimately nothing other than interpretation of the *gratia Dei* [grace of God] in the arena of science.'[148] On the other hand, scientific theology is doxological. Bavinck maintains that God wishes human beings to love and glorify Him by a scientific theology.[149] In other words, a genuine theology is a science that serves to glorify God. 'Dogmatics, therefore, is not a dull and arid science. It is a theodicy, a doxology to all God's virtues and perfections, a hymn of adoration and thanksgiving, a "glory to God in the highest."'[150]

C. The Task of the Science of God

a. The Organic System of the Knowledge of God

Having demonstrated the three decisive factors of Bavinck's definition of scientific theology, it is not difficult to infer three primary tasks of the science of God. First, scientific theology is intended to articulate an organic system of the knowledge of God. This task is maintained by Bavinck as against Kaftan's devaluation of the systematic construction of theology. For Bavinck, systematic character is the common destiny of all science. 'System is the supreme desideratum in all science. … For theology, too, the supreme desideratum is the unity of truth, the system of the knowledge of God.'[151] Clearly, Bavinck's parallel of scientific theology with the other sciences appears again. On this basis, he further argues that as natural

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[147] *CWB*, 65-68; *CWV*, 89-91.
[148] Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Raymond VanLeeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no.1 (1989): 65.
[149] *WHG*, 42.
[150] *RD*, 1:112; *GD*, 1:89-90.
[151] *RD*, 1:618; *GD*, 1:588; James Orr, whose work Bavinck draws on regularly in *Reformed Dogmatics*, argues that the pursuit of the unity of knowledge is essential to the human mind; *The Christian View of God and the World: As Centring in the Incarnation, Being the Kerr Lectures for 1890-91* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 6.

scientists draw truths from nature, theologians devote themselves to collecting data from Holy Scripture and organising them.[152] In other words, the task of scientific theology should be accomplished on the ground of God's revelation. The glorious task of theology is to know the organism of truth as revealed by God.[153] More specifically, the task of theology 'is and can, from its very nature, be nothing other than a scientific exposition of religious truth, a detailed exposition and interpretation of the Word of God.'[154]

How is the organic system of scientific theology built up on the basis of the interpretation of the Word of God? Bavinck maintains that '[the dogmatician's] duty is not to repeat Scripture literally word for word but to discover the ideas that are concealed in the words of Scripture and to explicate the relationships between them.'[155] Specifically, this happens in two ways, respectively the analytic and the synthetic. 'First, theology lays bare the content of Holy Scripture to us by the strong scientific exegesis. After that, it summarises systematically what has been found.'[156] According to Bavinck, moreover, the discovery of the ideas embedded in the words of Holy Scripture is continuous to the eschaton. In view of the organic character of the system of theology, he believes that theology will continue to expand insofar as the dispensation of the Spirit has not yet ended, which is consecrated to the interpretation of the Word of God.[157] Again, the cooperation of the Logos and the Holy Spirit is perceptible.

b. Serving the Church

The second task of the science of God is to serve the Church. This corresponds with the social character of dogma, that is, that dogma is associated with the Church and its confession, as has been stated earlier. In this light, scientific theology cannot be undertaken outside of the communion of all the saints and the fellowship of faith.[158] With this in mind, he argues that the task of dogmatics is 'to lead the church in understanding and knowing itself, in order to bring

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[152] *WHG*, 12.
[153] *WHG*, 37.
[154] *RD*, 1:55; *GD*, 1:32; also see *WHG*, 10.
[155] *RD*, 3:590; *GD*, 3:598.
[156] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 271. Dutch original: 'Eerst moet zij door streng wetenschappelijke exegese den inhoud der H. Schrift ons bloot leggen. Daarna heeft zij het gevondene systematisch saam te vatten.' Bavinck does not explain what scientific exegesis is. However, according to the immediate context, it probably refers to the literary analysis of scriptural texts, which should be completed before the synthetic work.
[157] *WHG*, 47.
[158] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 128-129; Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 59-60. In an earlier letter to Snouck Hurgronje, Bavinck said that the Theological School in Kampen could never be purely scientific due to its financial and moral dependence on the church; "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, Kampen, 6 januari 1880," in de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 63. Chapter 6 will examine Bavinck's view of scientific theology, the church, the theological school (i.e. seminary) and the university.

the church to awareness of its own life and treasures.'[159] This task is actualised in the contribution of dogmatics to the confession of the Church. 'Dogmatics is nothing other than the scientific description of the confession of the church.'[160]

How shall we understand the term "scientific description"? First of all, one needs keep in mind that for Bavinck it is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church in history into all truth by the means of the confessions of the churches.[161] This means that the confessions of the churches are historic. Given this, the task of scientific theologians 'is not to draw the material for his dogmatics exclusively from the written confession of his own church but to view it in the total context of the unique faith and life of his church, and then again in the context of the history of the whole church of Christ.'[162] Therefore, the confessions of the churches are revisable insofar as 'Scripture alone is the norm and rule of faith and life'; the credence of the confessions is to rest upon their faithfulness to Holy Scripture.[163] In an unpublished and undated manuscript on 'Dogmatiek', Bavinck asks: 'Is there biblical, critical, Christian Dogmatics?'[164] He does not answer this question therein. Now, this question can be answered by the task of scientific theology to serve the Church, which indicates that dogmatics or theology is grounded on Holy Scripture, critically accepts and examines the confessions of the churches, and aims to strengthen the Christian community.

c. Directing God's People to Worship God

The third task of scientific theology is to lead the people of God to glorify and worship God. To be sure, this task is determined by God as the object of scientific theology and its doxological *telos*. Thus, Bavinck maintains that the primary task of theology is to make God known to us so that we will revere and worship him.[165] Furthermore, Bavinck maintains that this task needs to be actualised in the healthy relationship between scientific theology and the other sciences. One crucial aspect is that through doxologically scientific theology, the other sciences are directed to worship God. (Chapter six will analyse Bavinck's view of the relationship between scientific theology and the other sciences in detail, particularly his notion of theology as the 'Queen of the sciences'.)

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[159] *PCDS*, 101.
[160] *Ibid.*, 94.
[161] *RD*, 1:83; *GD*, 1:59.
[162] *RD*, 1:86; *GD*, 1:62.
[163] *RD*, 1:86; *GD*, 1:63.
[164] Herman Bavinck, "Dogmatiek," in *Herman Bavinck Archive* (Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Amsterdam), Box 15, Folder 159, "§I Begrip des Dogma." This undated manuscript of 'Dogmatiek' is the outline of Bavinck's dogmatics, which consists primarily of amounts of unanswered questions.
[165] *WHG*, 39, 44.

d. Summary

These three primary tasks of theology are theocentric through and through.

> [Theology] is driven by an internal longing to consider all of the words and deeds of God, to perceive their connection and to trace all of them together back to the divine being that is the origin and goal of all things. Theologically, it is thus from the beginning to the end. From God it proceeds; to Him it returns. It has no rest until it has found rest in Him.[166]

By attaining these tasks, scientific theology has its rest in God Himself. This theocentric view of scientific tasks is unique to theology, which is derived from the definition of scientific theology *per se*. Without a doubt, Bavinck believes that these theocentric tasks of scientific theology differentiate theology from the other sciences. In this light, scientific theology cannot be replaced by religious science. Neither can it be subject to the criteria of natural science. This is because neither religious science nor natural science can accomplish the tasks of scientific theology.

V. Bavinck's Scientific Theology in relation to Neo-Calvinism More Broadly

A. Geerhardus Vos

Bavinck's definition and tasks of scientific theology have the resonances in wider neo-Calvinism, especially in the theologies of Abraham Kuyper and Geerhardus Vos. In the late nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century, Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), who was Bavinck's lifelong friend, was the most important representative of Dutch neo-Calvinism in the United States.[167] He consulted Bavinck on publishing the reviews of Dutch theological books in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, and translated and published Bavinck's articles in this journal.[168] Vos himself also reviewed the first two volumes of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*.[169]

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[166] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 125; Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 55.

[167] On the life of Geerhardus Vos, see James T. Dennison, "Introduction: The Life of Geerhardus Vos," in *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005), 13-85. On the friendship of Bavinck and Vos and Vos's significant promotion of Bavinck's theology in America, see George Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 18-31; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 178. On Vos's neo-Calvinist biblical theology, see John Halsey Wood, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism at Old Princeton: Geerhardus Vos and The Rise of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 13, no. 1 (2006): 1-22.

[168] Geerhardus Vos, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005), 131-132, 153-154. Bavinck, "Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands," 209-228; "The Future of Calvinism," trans. Geerhardus Vos, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5, no. 17 (1894): 1-24.

[169] Geerhardus Vos, "Review of Gereformeerde Dogmatiek – Vol. One by H. Bavinck," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard Gaffin (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001), 475-484; "Review of Gereformeerde Dogmatiek – Vol. Two by H.

Vos's alignment with the neo-Calvinist ethos notwithstanding, he is different to Bavinck in that he uses the term "science" primarily to describe biblical theology. In his five-volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1896), Vos does not discuss the scientificity of dogmatic theology.[170] On 8 May 1894, however, Vos delivered his inaugural address as the Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, entitled 'The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline.'

Vos spells out the scientificity of theology etymologically. He writes: ''Etymology … tells us that Theology is *knowledge concerning God*, … Only when making Theology knowledge concerning God do we have the right to call it a separate science.'[171] Moreover, he maintains that 'God, as distinct from the creature, is the only legitimate object of Theology.'[172] Like Bavinck, Vos thinks of God as the only real object of theology, which means the whole enterprise of scientific theology is predicated upon God. Following this, Vos offers a further description of God as the object of theology, arguing that God 'takes the first step to approach man for the purpose of disclosing His nature' so that the created human being can receive the knowledge of God. This means that for Vos scientific theology cannot be achieved without God's self-revelation. On the basis of revelation, he further clarifies the object of theology: 'not God in and for Himself, but God in so far as He *has revealed* Himself, is the object of Theology.'[173] Clearly, the archetypal-ectypal thinking can be perceived in Vos's view of scientific theology. Thus far, it could be argued that Vos and Bavinck hold the same view of the prerequisites for scientific theology.

Vos then argues that the revelation of God is deposited in Holy Scripture. Following this, biblical theology 'consists in the appropriation of that supernatural process by which God has made Himself the object of our knowledge.'[174] Hence, the task of scientific biblical theologians is to 'let the image of God's self-revelation in the Scriptures mirror itself as fully and clearly as possible in his mind.'[175] Vos's line of reasoning is: Since (1) scientific theology is determined by God and His revelation, and since (2) God's self-revelation is preserved in Holy Scripture, therefore (3) scientific theology is none other than biblical theology. This means that

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Bavinck," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard Gaffin (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001), 485-493.

[170] Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, trans. Richard Gaffin, 5 vols., ed. Richard Gaffin et al. (Bellingham: Lexham, 2014-16).

[171] Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," 4; emphatics original.

[172] *Ibid*.

[173] *Ibid.*, 5; emphasis added.

[174] *Ibid*.

[175] *Ibid.*

the essence of scientific theology consists in its faithfulness and commitment to God's revelation in *Holy Scripture*. In this respect, Vos believes that biblical theology surpasses systematic theology. This is explicit in the ensuing lengthy but requisite quotation:

> The specific character of Biblical Theology lies in this, that it discusses both the form and contents of revelation from the point of view of the revealing activity of God Himself. In other words, it deals with revelation in the active sense, as an act of God, and tries to understand and trace and describe this act, so far as this is possible to man and does not elude our finite observation. In Biblical Theology both the form and contents of revelation are considered as parts and products of a *divine work*. In Systematic Theology these same contents of revelation appear, but not under the aspect of the stages of a divine work; rather as the material for a human work of classifying and systematizing according to logical principles. *Biblical Theology applies no other method of grouping and arranging these contents than is given in the divine economy of revelation itself*.[176]

Accordingly, Vos elevates biblical theology to such a high place that it is the utmost science of the knowledge of God. John Webster points out that Vos's argument entails two issues: (1) 'classifying and systematizing according to logical principles' is lifted to the primary place; (2) systematic theology is deprived of '[the] presentation of revelation in its canonical form.' In consequence, 'systematic theology becomes a kind of analytical theology, operating at some distance from the idiom of Scripture and heavily conceptual in tone and structure.'[177] Bavinck, it would seem, must take issue with Vos in this respect. Apart from this divergence, like Bavinck's description of dogmatic theology as an organic science, Vos maintains that biblical theology is an organism on the ground that it is guided in the economy of revelation to its end.[178]

With this in mind, the reason why Vos did not elaborate on the scientificity of dogmatic theology in his five-volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* in 1896 comes to the fore. In contrast with Bavinck, who subordinates biblical theology to dogmatic theology, Vos takes a reverse order and renders the latter inferior to the former. He contends that 'Dogmatics is the crown which *grows out of* all the work that Biblical Theology can accomplish.'[179] Thus, the scientificity of dogmatics depends on that of biblical theology.

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[176] *Ibid*, 6-7; emphatics added.
[177] John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 148.
[178] Vos, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline," 7. Vos maintains the historical progress of the divine revelation, which underlies the organic character of biblical theology. He argues 'Biblical Theology, rightly defined, is nothing else than *the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity*.' (15).
[179] *Ibid.*, 24; emphatics added. Prior to this judgment, Vos recognises the biblical character of both systematic and biblical theology. 'The only difference is, that in the one case this constructive principle is systematic

Interestingly, Bavinck draws on Vos's 'The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline' once in *Reformed Dogmatics*.[180] However, he never engages with Vos's views of the scientificity of biblical theology. No hint in Bavinck's work can be found on his silence in this respect. One of the reasons, I surmise, may be that Vos was Bavinck's close friend and a significant advocator of Bavinck's theology and neo-Calvinism in America. Bavinck's public critique of Vos's theological methodology would more or less produce a negative bearing on the international spread of neo-Calvinism. After all, Vos and Bavinck concur that a genuine scientific (both biblical and dogmatic) theology must have God as the real object, depend upon God's self-revelation, and be bound up with God.

Notwithstanding that one would have reservations on Bavinck's subordination of biblical theology to dogmatics, his scientific theology challenges Vos's scientific biblical theology on how dogmatics is formulated out of biblical theology. What is the function of ecclesial confessions in the process from biblical theology to dogmatics? Are confessions created out of revelation according to logical principles or purely out of the work of biblical theology?

B. Abraham Kuyper

George Harinck argues that 'Kuyper and Bavinck belong together like Goldman and Sachs or Mercedes and Benz.'[181] However, this does not mean that their theologies are identical. Despite this, as Syd Hielema rightly notes, 'no consensus exists concerning how Bavinck's theology differs from that of Kuyper … careful, in-depth analysis remains to be done.'[182] As two leading neo-Calvinist theologians, both Kuyper and Bavinck painstakingly demonstrate the scientificity of theology. In contrast with Vos, Kuyper offers another diverging discourse on theology as a science.

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and logical, whereas in the other case it is purely historical. In other words, Systematic Theology endeavors to construct a circle, Biblical Theology seeks to reproduce a line.' (23) Interestingly, Vos contradicts his older contemporary Old Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield (1851-1921) in this regard. Warfield defines biblical theology as a sub-category of exegetical theology, which serves more advanced disciplines, that is, historical theology and systematic theology. Hence, he even calls exegetical theology the 'true and especial handmaid' of systematic theology; Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Idea of Systematic Theology," in *Studies in Theology*, The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 64-65.

[180] *RD*, 1:366; *GD*, 1:336

[181] Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," 18.

[182] Hielema, "Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption," 202. Cory Brock makes a list of the shared frameworks and themes between Kuyper and Bavinck: 'the correspondence between subject and object, the search for the infinite, a radical emphasis on revelation as the key to unlocking the mysteries of existence, the 'inner-self', the ego (Ik), the 'I' of the 'I think', subjectivity and its relation to a general, inner revelation of God within the human consciousness.' Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 112. In his Bavinck's biography, Eglinton has tried to chart out how their theological relationship developed across their lifetimes; Eglinton, *Bavinck*.

Kuyper's view of theology as a science is unfolded in detail in his three-volume *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*. As the title shows, Kuyper demonstrates the scientificity of theology in view of theological encyclopaedia. By the term "encyclopaedia", generally, Kuyper refers to a science which organises chaotic human knowledge into an organic system and explores the relationship between different parts of science.[183] Now that encyclopaedia is an organic science, it encompasses various particular encyclopaedias that are interrelated.[184] He then argues that theological encyclopaedia is a special one within the encyclopaedia of the entirety of human knowledge.[185] This means that theological encyclopaedia should have an organic relationship with the other encyclopaedias, which in turn indicates the affinity of theology with the other sciences.

Kuyper anticipates objections to theological encyclopaedia, which are caused by the scientific nature of theology and the definition of theology.[186] It is evident that Kuyper's discourse on scientific theology serves to vindicate theological encyclopaedia. That is to say, while speaking of scientific theology, he aims on the one hand to demonstrate the independence of theology as a science and on the other hand to articulate the relationship of theology with the other sciences.[187] As such, he contends that 'theology appears first as an organic component of the whole of sciences and then second as having organic components within itself.'[188] The second volume of *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* is devoted to elaborating on these two aspects.

Kuyper first sheds light on the organism of science. He adopts an etymological manner of defining the term "science" (*wetenschap*). *Wetenschap* is related to the verb "*weten*" (to know or knowing), which means 'look[ing] for something in order to find it.'[189] Specifically, Kuyper argues:

> there lies in this *weten* not so much the thought of an analysis of the content of unique affair or fact, as the thought of the existence of it, that is, the antithesis between its *being* and *not* being. … it is only then *weten* when I have in my

[183] *EST*, 1-26; *EHG*, 1:1-27.
[184] Kuyper argues that every science is independent but related to the other sciences insofar as different phenomena are interrelated; *EST*, 37; *EHG*, 38-39.
[185] *EST*, 45; *EHG*, 1:46.
[186] *EST*, 45; *EHG*, 1:46.
[187] For Kuyper, one crucial rationale of dealing with the relationship between theology and the other sciences is *palingenesis*; see *EST*, 219-227; *EHG*, 2:170-178. Chapter six will further account for this point.
[188] *EHG*, 1:56.
[189] *EST*, 59-60; *EHG*, 2:4-5.

> consciousness not only this representation but also at the same time the sense that this representation corresponds to the *real existence*.[190]

Accordingly, essential to the conception of science is the perception of its real object. *Wetenschap* is to know 'what there is, that it is there, and how it is there.'[191] For Kuyper, this perception has its ground on faith. By faith, the reliability of sense organs and the reality of things perceived are accepted with certainty. Faith is the point of departure of all knowledge.[192] Following this, Kuyper contends, 'As faith provides us the starting-point for our observation and the axiomatic starting-point for every demonstration, it also offers us *the motive* for the construction of science.'[193]

Meanwhile, this perception implies a correspondence between the subject and object of science.[194] As with Bavinck, Kuyper maintains that this perception can take place in both visible and invisible worlds. He thus contends that '[t]here is in us a thirst after a knowledge of things which shall be the outcome of immediate sight, even if this sight takes place without the bodily eye.'[195] It is evident that for Kuyper there is twofold science. Hence, he resolutely objects to confining *wetenschap* to natural science. Rather, the term "science" refers to 'human science as a whole.'[196]

With the notion of twofold science, Kuyper justifies scientific theology by the reality of God's self-revelation. It is the Word of God that assists us in seeing religious reality immediately and thus acquiring the knowledge of that reality. 'The usage of *wetenschap*, which holds fast to the conception of sight in knowing, is entirely in harmony with Revelation, which points us to a science that shall consist in *seeing*.'[197] It is apparent that both Bavinck and Kuyper hold the same view that scientific theology is entirely predicated upon the revelation of God. On this basis, Kuyper argues that the material *principium* of theology is God's self-revelation. However, scientific theology springs from the proximate *principium*, that is, Holy Scripture that is the completed divine revelation. This is because theology can only begin after

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[190] *EHG*, 2:6; *EST*, 61; rev. Kuyper explains the meaning of *weten* in comparison with that of *kennen*, which 'does not refer to the *being* or *not* being, but assumes it as a fact, and analyzes it for the sake of introducing it into the world of our conceptions.'
[191] *EST*, 61-62; *EHG*, 2:6-7.
[192] *EST*, 130-132; *EHG*, 2:77-78.
[193] *EST*, 137; *EHG*, 2:84. Kuyper also expresses the same contention in Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 173-174. Further on Kuyper's view of the relationship of faith and science, see René van Woudenberg, "Abraham Kuyper on Faith and Science," in *Kuyper Reconsidered: Aspects of His Life and Work*, ed. Cornelis van der Kooi and Jan de Bruijn (Amsterdam: VU, 1999), 147-157.
[194] Kuyper offers a detailed explication of the subject and object of science, see *EST*, 63-83; *EHG*, 2:8-29.
[195] *EST*, 62; *EHG*, 2:7.
[196] Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 146. On Kuyper's view of spiritual science, see *EST*, 92-105; *EHG*, 2:39-52.
[197] *EST*, 62; *EHG*, 2:7; rev.

the completion of revelation.[198] The term "proximate" is indicative of the ectypal knowledge of God that is the foundation of scientific theology.

Kuyper maintains that the reality of God's revelation is not proved by evidences; rather, it is a hypothesis, which is presupposed for scientific theology. Given his view of faith, it could be argued that like Bavinck, Kuyper holds the significance of faith for the hypothesis of revelation. For him, moreover, there should be another hypothesis that God has imparted human beings the *imago Dei* so that they are capable of receiving this ectypal knowledge. Thereby, the harmony between the object and subject of scientific theology is established.[199] It is striking that both Bavinck and Kuyper think of revelation as a hypothesis that is prerequisite for scientific theology. Nonetheless, they differ in that for Kuyper this hypothesis must go hand in hand with the hypothesis of human capacity for revelation that is derived from the innate *imago Dei*. Karl Barth offers the critique that Kuyper compromises with natural theology insofar as '[t]he concept of revelation and that of reason, history or humanity were usually linked by the copulative particle "and".'[200] However, Barth's criticism cannot stand before Kuyper's definition of theology and its peculiar character. Kuyper writes:

> If … theology is a knowledge which does not deal with creatures but illumines our minds with respect to the Creator and also the "*principium* and end of all things," it follows that this knowledge must be of a *different* nature, and must be able to come to us along a *different* way. The norms that are valid for our knowledge elsewhere cannot be used here; the way of knowledge must here be different, and the character itself of this knowledge must differ from all other science.[201]

In this light, Kuyper's view of scientific theology, which presupposes revelation and human capacity for it, does not give way to natural theology. Rather, it is grounded in the reality of God as the Creator. In other words, scientific theology is entirely the gift of God, whose exclusive aim is to know God.[202] 'Hence the higher idea of *the knowledge of God* determines Theological science and not Theological science the idea of Theology.'[203] Again, the commonality of Bavinck's and Kuyper's views of scientific theology is perceived. Both insist that scientific theology proceeds from the highest dogma, that is, the dogma of the knowledge of God.

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[198] *EST*, 347; *EHG*, 2:300-301.
[199] *EST*, 217-218; *EHG*, 2:169.
[200] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Volume II: The Doctrine of God, Part 1*, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al., ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 173.
[201] *EHG*, 2:190; *EST*, 239; rev.
[202] Cf. *EST*, 242; *EHG*, 2:193.
[203] *EST*, 246; *EHG*, 2:197.

Kuyper anticipates an objection that theology cannot be considered as a science since God is transcendent. In the response, he argues that 'not the unknown *Essence* of God but the ectypal revelation (*revelatio ectypa*) which has been made *known*, is the object of Theology.'[204] More specifically,

> the theological science finds its object of investigation *in our revealed, ectypal knowledge of God*. ... God alone knows Himself (archetypal knowledge of God), and that there is no created being that can know anything of Him, unless He himself reveals something from His self-knowledge and self-consciousness in a form that falls within the comprehension of the creature (ectypal knowledge of God). Had this revelation, now, happened in the form of perfect analysis and synthesis, it would at once satisfy the most rigorous requirements of our scientific wants, and would simply have to be merged into the result of our rest scientific work.[205]

As with Bavinck, Kuyper deploys the thinking of archetypal-ectypal theology in scientific theology. By doing so, he not only rejects an empiristic view of science, but also reinforces the significance of the affinity of revelation and scientific theology. In this way, Kuyper spells out his argument for why scientific theology deserves its place in the organism of science.

To summarise, the demonstration of Kuyper's scientific theology above proves that Kuyper and Bavinck have many commonalities, which could be viewed as fundamental to neo-Calvinist account of scientific theology. These commonalities include the idea of God as the real object, the hypothesis of God's self-revelation, Holy Scripture as the *principium*, God's absolute authority over scientific theology, the thinking of archetypal-ectypal theology, and the intellectual character of faith. Despite these, the divergence between Bavinck and Kuyper is obvious.[206] Bavinck furnishes a sound account of scientific theology on the dogmatic level. His primary intention is to articulate a scientific system of *dogmatic* theology. By contrast, Kuyper presents scientific theology from an encyclopaedic angle. His primary purpose seems not to establish a science of dogmatics. Rather, Kuyper seeks to construct a theological encyclopaedia, which proves theology as an independent science and exhibits the relationship between theology and the other sciences. In this light, Kuyper's scientific theology serves for public theology. That is, scientific theology is primarily intended to justify the relevance of theology to public life, especially public intellectual life.

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[204] *EST*, 218-219; *EHG*, 2:169-170.
[205] *EHG*, 2:166-167; *EST*, 215-216; rev.
[206] The divergence is here only related to scientific theology. On a detailed analysis of the dissimilarities of their views of *wetenschap*, see Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 39-45; also see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 93-97. Chapter six of the thesis will delve into the difference between Bavinck and Kuyper on this matter.

VI. Concluding Remarks

How would Bavinck respond Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's question, as stated in the beginning of this chapter? Central to Snouck Hurgronje's critique is that Bavinck considers 'the world of the absolute as the object of science' and has 'metaphysical subjects' as the content of scientific theology. Given that Snouck Hurgronje's letter was composed after reading the first edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* volume 1, Bavinck's engagement with Kaftan, which was added to the second edition, could be thought of as the response to his friend. In the analysis of Kaftan's dogmatics, Bavinck emphatically opposes an empiristic approach to science, which heightens his notion of twofold science. Moreover, on the basis of faith, it is arguable that the correspondence between the subject and object of science consists both in the visible and the invisible worlds.

This response to Snouck Hurgronje further strengthens the three factors of Bavinck's definition of scientific theology: God as the real object, the necessary assumptions in faith, and its divine object-defining character. The core of this definition is nothing other than the truth that God has conveyed His knowledge in revelation to animate the science of God. Faith in the reality of God's self-revelation is the same as the faith in the reality of the object of all science. Hence, Kristensen rightly notes:

> Science presupposes revelation, for the human intellect is not a source of truth. Humans stand on the foundation of creation and are established and sought after by God's power and wisdom. … Revelation thus denotes the divine act that gives life to true science. This is only another formulation of the assertion that faith undergirds the foundation of all science.[207]

Accordingly, Bavinck's scientific theology is not merely a dogmatic enterprise. Rather, it aims to have a healthy connection to the other sciences. This means that although scientific theology has its object in 'the world of the absolute', as Snouck Hurgronje claims, it condescends to have a fellowship with the other sciences, which will be discussed in chapters 6-7.

The discourse thus far demonstrates that Bavinck's scientific theology primarily has five rationales. First, the revelation of God is prerequisite for the science of God. Second, the system of the science of God is organic. Third, scientific theology must hold fast to realism. Fourth, the universal feature of dogma, expressed particularly in theology's relationship with the other sciences, proves the catholicity of scientific theology. Fifth, the theocentric essence of scientific theology discloses its doxological *telos*. In Bavinck's theological system, these five rationales are woven together as the grammar of scientific theology. Thereby, they pave the

[207] Kristensen, "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work," 47.

way for a meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's theology. That is, the five rationales serve to articulate an apparatus which coordinates various fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's thought so as to set out the holistic fabric of his dogmatic theology.

This grammar is the summary of this chapter; however, it raises further questions. What is the meaning of the grammar and its rationales? Is this grammar exempted from any challenge from modern theology, particularly those critiques that would be registered by the theologians after Bavinck? How does this grammar undergird the system of scientific theology? These questions warrant the following chapter.

Chapter 4 The Grammar of Scientific Theology (I)

> All things are considered in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as the starting point.[1]
>
> Herman Bavinck

I. Introduction

The preceding chapter has unfolded Bavinck's definition of scientific theology and sketched the contour and five rationales of this science as per the three defining factors. As has been briefly mentioned, these rationales constitute Bavinck's grammar of scientific theology. By the term "grammar," it is implied that the rationales are not discrete; neither are they independent of one another. Yet the singularity of the term "grammar" is indicative of the unity of and the correlation between the rationales. The simultaneity of the five rationales is one core meaning of the term "grammar." While speaking of one rationale, we need to keep in mind the other four. None can be dispensed with if one wishes to watch the whole landscape of Bavinck's scientific theology. The five rationales exist in concatenation.

It should be clarified that this study does not attempt to build a hermeneutical framework for interpreting Bavinck's theological system arbitrarily. '[A]ll grammar ever does,' Gerhard Ebeling notes, 'is to derive its rules from the language as it is actually spoken; it cannot prescribe arbitrary rules for it.'[2] Likewise, the grammar I am speaking of here, which incorporates the five rationales of Bavinck's scientific theology, is derivative of Bavinck's theological system and open to being supplemented to reach its consummation. Nonetheless, as will be seen, Bavinck's grammar of scientific theology, which I shall elaborate on in this chapter and the next, affords a sharp lens through which Bavinck's theology can be better grasped as a unity that is marked by internal harmony.

In what follows, I will explicate this grammar by accounting in detail for the five rationales outlined in the previous chapters successively: positive revelationalism, theological organism, organically critical realism, dialectical catholicity, and doxological teleology. My discussion on the grammar will be divided into two chapters. The current chapter will shed light on the first three rationales, which is followed by chapter five on the last two. In the course of the following argumentation, one will find that Bavinck's grammar of scientific theology possesses a Trinitarian fabric. It is the doctrine of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the

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[1] *RD*, 2:29; *GD*, 2:2.
[2] Gerhard Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language* (London: Collins, 1973), 133.

Holy Spirit—that governs the grammar and organises the five rationales into a harmoniously united apparatus. Moreover, one will discover the *exitus-reditus* scheme of the grammar—that is, the grammar resembles a circle, whose starting point and end point are nothing other than God. More specifically, notwithstanding the fact that Bavinck does not explicitly employ "*exitus-reditus*" to qualify dogmatic methodology, the meaning of this term is implied and thus shows that the grammar of scientific theology has divine self-revelation as the point of departure and divine glorification as the end point; it displays Bavinck's belief that scientific theology is from God, by God, and for God. As such, the grammar on the one hand enhances Bavinck's viewpoint of theology as the science of God, and on the other hand it showcases a meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system.

II. Positive Revelationalism

A. The Experience of Revelation

As has been strenuously argued in the previous chapter, Bavinck holds fast to the belief that the possibility of theology is utterly grounded in the truth that God has revealed Himself. 'The object of theology was God himself, as he had made himself known to people in nature and grace. The whole discipline of theology was unfolded and ordered from this principle.'[3]

Bavinck's firm conviction in God's self-revelation can be described as a sort of revelationalism. The suffix "-ism" denotes his belief that the content and fabric of scientific theology should have God's revelation as the sole foundation. In this light, Bavinck doubtless stands in the Patristic and the Reformation traditions. However, if one browses through the first two volumes of *Reformed Dogmatics*, it can be perceived that Bavinck stresses the role that human experience and consciousness play in the appropriation of God's revelation. This observation may lead to a conclusion that Bavinck leans towards Schleiermacher's theology or neo-Kantianism or positivism, which seems to depict Bavinck as a Jekyll and Hyde theologian moving back and forth orthodoxy and modernity. Indeed, this "two Bavincks" model has been overthrown by the recent Bavinckian scholarship. Nonetheless, the account of Bavinck's view of the positivity of revelation below will underline the falsity of the dualistic methodology and, more importantly, exhibits the unity of Bavinck's system based on the *locus* of revelation.

Before unveiling the positivity of revelation, Bavinck's conception of revelation should be laid out first. In response to the naturalist negation of revelation, Bavinck presents a succinct definition of revelation:

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[3] Bavinck, "Theology and Religious Studies," trans. Harry Boonstra in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 50.

> Generally speaking, revelation is the communication or announcement of something that is still unknown and in the domain of religion includes three elements: (1) The existence of a personal divine being who originates the announcement; (2) a truth, fact, or event that up until the time of its announcement was not yet known; (3) a human being to whom the announcement was made.[4]

Two observations are worth noting with respect to the statement above. First, the announcement of the unknown 'truth, fact, or event' proves that revelation is essentially theoretical and possesses specific content. The revealed content and truth consist in Holy Scripture, nature, and history, and is conveyed *via* the word of God.[5] As Bavinck describes, '[r]evelation certainly is not a series of sounds without content, … but a word that conveys a specific concept.'[6] The identification of revelation and word is consistent with Bavinck's principle that 'the *Deus dixit* is *primum principium*, to which all dogmas … can be traced back.'[7]

Unlike Karl Barth's three forms of the Word of God (Jesus Christ as the revealed Word of God, Scripture as the written word of God, church proclamation as the preached word of God), Bavinck enumerates its fourfold meaning in Holy Scripture: (1) the word of God as God's power for creation and providence; (2) the word of God as the special revelation communicated to the prophets and apostles; (3) the word of God as the content of revelation as recorded in Holy Scripture now; (4) Jesus Christ as the unique Word of God.[8] By this fourfold implication, Bavinck intends to lay bare the Christocentric character of revelation. He contends immediately: 'All God's revelations, all God's words, in nature and history, in creation and re-creation, in the Old and the New Testament, have their ground, unity, and midpoint in [Christ].'[9] The Christocentric understanding of Holy Scripture corresponds with Bavinck's belief that Holy Scripture is revelation, the sole *principium externum* of theology.[10] Such a belief is derivative of the conviction that Holy Scripture bears witness to Jesus Christ, who is the zenith of revelation. 'The whole of revelation, summed up in Scripture, is a special revelation that comes to us in Christ.'[11] Therefore, Bavinck is justified in upholding both the claim that 'Holy Scripture is the *principium* of theology', and the sentiment that '[t]he content

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[4] *RD*, 1:295; *GD*, 1:267.
[5] *RD*, 1:377-380; *PR*, 113, 142, 208.
[6] *RD*, 1:295; *GD*, 1:267.
[7] *GD*, 1:559; *RD*, 1:590; rev.; also see Herman Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, trans. Harry der Nederlanden (Ontario: Paideia Press, 1980), 27.
[8] *RD*, 1:401-402; *GD*, 1:371-372.
[9] *GD*, 1:372; *RD*, 1:402; rev.
[10] Chapter 3, IV.B.b.
[11] *RD*, 1:321; *GD*, 1:292. Bavinck also designates Holy Scripture as 'the handmaiden of Christ'; *RD*, 1:440; *GD*, 1:411.

of dogmatics is the knowledge of God as he has revealed it in Christ through his Word.'[12] By arguing so, Bavinck thinks of revelation as axiomatic for theology.

The second observation on Bavinck's definition above is that the personal God initiates revelation and communicates it to human beings. In this respect, the crucial point is concerning how we understand the words "personal" and "communicated." First, the personal God as the initiator of revelation unveils the objectively idealistic colour of Bavinck's theology.[13] More precisely, Bavinck's claim is similar to personal idealism as espoused by Keith Ward. 'Personal idealism holds that there is one supreme mind on which everything else depends and that is personal—that knows, thinks, feels, and intends.'[14] By the same token, Bavinck writes: 'God is the Almighty, who is infinitely higher than all creatures, … all things in Scripture are described over and over as having been made by God and as being absolutely dependent on him.'[15] The supreme mind is the almighty God who created all things; thus, all things depend on the infinite mind. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that there is a fundamental difference between Bavinck and Ward. The latter argues that 'God [is] being changed by the inclusion of created things in the divine being, either now or in the future.'[16] In contradistinction, on the ground of the doctrine of creation, Bavinck accentuates the ontological chasm between God the Creator and all creatures.[17] Bavinck would have criticised Ward as pantheistic insofar as Ward seems to ascribe the idea of becoming to God. For Bavinck, '[t]he difference between the Creator and the creature hinges on the contrast between being and becoming.'[18]

Despite this radical divergence in the ontological matter, the first facet of Bavinck's definition of revelation can be formulated in terms of Ward's personal idealism as the following: The existence of a supreme mind, that is, the divine being who knows and thinks and feels, intends to originate the announcement. This personal idealism is significant to Bavinck in illuminating the scientificity of theology by repudiating rationalism and empiricism. The former sacrifices being for knowing, whereas the latter knowing for being. That is, both trigger

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[12] *RD*, 1:87, 110; *GD*, 1:63, 88.
[13] Note that the idealism under Bavinck's critique is subjective idealism or idealistic rationalism; for example, *RD*, 1:217, 223, 565. Further on Bavinck's assessment of idealism, see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 123-134.
[14] Keith Ward, *The Christian Idea of God: A Philosophical Foundations for Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.
[15] *RD*, 2:417; *GD*, 2:380-381.
[16] Ward, *Christian Idea of God*, 11.
[17] *RD*, 2:443-507
[18] *RD*, 2:156; *CW*, 30-60. A helpful analysis of Bavinck's notions of being and becoming can be seen in James Eglinton, "To Be or To Become–That is the Question: Locating the Actualistic in Bavinck's Ontology," in *The Kuyper Center Review Volume 2: Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 105-125; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 115-121.

the imbalance between subject and object.[19] In contrast with them, Bavinck's personal idealism reserves the space in scientific theology for the subjective appropriation of *objective revelation*, the axiomatic content and knowledge.

This personal idealism, therefore, underlies the action of communicating the announcement or the revealed specific concept. In some sense, revelation connotes the unidirectional process of the communication from God to human beings. This gives rise to the questions: What is the role that the human being plays in this process? And, what is the *modus operandi* of the communication?

In explaining the communication of God's revelation, Bavinck underscores the role of the human consciousness. He contends:

> [T]he ectypal knowledge of God granted in revelation and recorded in Holy Scripture; and the knowledge of God in the subject, insofar as it proceeds from revelation and *enters into the human consciousness*, are all three of them from God. It is God himself who discloses his self-knowledge, communicates it through revelation, and introduces it into human beings.[20]

Bavinck clarifies elsewhere the meaning of the human consciousness. He writes:

> [C]onsciousness clearly includes two elements. First, it is an awareness on the part of the subject regarding phenomena that occur within by which we come to know all sorts of things that are part of our consciousness. These include observing, remembering, judging, knowing; but also feelings, both sensory and spiritual; wishing, desiring, striving, wanting, and acting experiences … And second, it is an immediate awareness. It is a knowledge obtained not through external sense organs or through deliberate research and serious study but directly through immediate experience, through "an inner sense" [*inneren Sinn*], as Kant called it, in imitation of the *sensus interior* of Augustine and the Scholastics.[21]

Now that consciousness 'is a knowledge obtained … directly through *immediate experience*,' it seems that Bavinck thinks of divine revelation, which is fully loaded with the knowledge of God, as experienced by humans immediately.[22] The analysis hitherto seems to emphasise that Bavinck's revelationalism has a thick colour of positivism, which exclusively accentuates the function of human sensory perception and experience. Even if this is not the case, it could be

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[19] *CWB*, 15-16; *CWV*, 31-33; also see *RD*, 1:215, 219.
[20] *RD*, 1:213-214; *GD*, 1:185; emphasis added.
[21] Herman Bavinck, "The Unconscious," trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 175-176.
[22] Bavinck's notion of consciousness is undoubtedly influenced by Schleiermacher's theology; however, they are not identical. For a detailed analysis of Bavinck's critical appropriation of Schleiermacher's theology of consciousness, see Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, particularly chapter 3.

argued at least that Bavinck highlights the positive character of revelation by underscoring human consciousness and experience.

In explicating the positive character of revelation, it is noteworthy that Bavinck does not limit the idea of positivity to revelation. Yet he articulates the general epistemology that is characterised by positivity.

In *Christelijke Wetenschap* (Christian Science), Bavinck makes the human self-consciousness the correlate of science. He argues that the testimony of human self-consciousness is crucial for science. This consciousness testifies the existence of both the visible and invisible worlds with certainty. Bavinck maintains that this testimony lies in human self-awareness (*zelfbesef*) and has been given to our self-consciousness (*zelfbewustzijn*) immediately. The disapproval of this testimony actually contradicts human nature. Moreover, this testimony is the starting point from which science begins.[23] On this basis, Bavinck contends that in some sense all sciences, which explore their objects in the real worlds (both the visible and the invisible), are positive since the existence of the psychical world needs the testimony of our consciousness.[24] This echoes Bavinck's argument in *Reformed Dogmatics*:

> All knowledge comes from without. But on the human side all that knowledge is mediated by their consciousness. Not feeling or the heart but the mind, consciousness as a whole (perception, awareness, observation, intellect, reason, conscience) is the subjective organ of truth.[25]

This positive character of general epistemology, for Bavinck, is fundamentally rooted in the doctrine of creation. 'As created beings, we stand on the foundation of creatures, and thus can primarily know after experience; we can only reflect.'[26] By arguing so, Bavinck points out the fact that human knowing has its limits, that is, that it operates within the confines of the range of human experience.

Like the parallel between theology as the particular science and science in general, Bavinck applies the idea of the consciousness of general epistemology to theological epistemology.[27] He asserts:

> for [humans] the truth comes into being only by being made the object of our knowledge and an element of our consciousness. For this purpose God has

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[23] *CW*, 53.
[24] *CW*, 72.
[25] *RD*, 1:565; *GD*, 1:534.
[26] Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 7.
[27] Further on Bavinck's general epistemology, see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 45-76; Nathaniel Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck and Thomas Reid on Perception and Knowing God," *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 1 (2018): 115-134.

> deposited the truth in nature and Scripture, that we might have it, and by knowing it might rule through it. *In the knowledge of the truth lies the end of its revelation*; reality is an instrument to enable us to find the truth; *reality is intended to become truth in our consciousness and in our experience.*[28]

As has been indicated in the last chapter, both in scientific theology and general science, faith is of considerable significance for the human appropriation of knowledge. For Bavinck, therefore, the entry of knowledge, the knowledge of God *par excellence*, into the human consciousness is essentially associated with faith. Given this, there is no wonder that Bavinck designates faith as 'believing consciousness' or 'the act of the human consciousness.'[29]

On this basis, a tentative conclusion can be drawn that for Bavinck the revelation of God, which is axiomatic for theology, can be immediately experienced by humans in such a way that it can be appropriated by the subjective, believing consciousness (faith) of the human agent; this subjectively experienced revelation is the foundation only on which can scientific theology be erected.

B. Positive but not Positivistic: Tackling the Anticipatory Critique of Revelatory Positivism

Having demonstrated Bavinck's viewpoint that the revelation of God is experienced by humans in their believing consciousness, a challenge from Barthian scholarship can be anticipated: Whether Bavinck lapses into the morass of revelatory positivism (*Offenbarungspositivismus*), which is described by some scholars—for example, Bonhoeffer, Pannenberg, and van Huyssteen—as characteristic of Barth's theology of revelation.

The earliest critique of Barth's theology of revelation would be from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). Following his praise of Barth's break with liberal theology, Bonhoeffer argues that 'in the nonreligious interpretation of theological concepts [Barth] gave no concrete guidance, either in dogmatics or ethics. Here he reaches his limit, and that is why his theology of revelation has become positivist, a "positivism of revelation," as I call it.'[30] Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer does not further clarify the meaning of *Offenbarungspositivismus*. Some years later, Wolfhart Pannenberg offered a detailed critique of Barth's positivism. He argues:

> Barth rightly rejects the reduction of the subject-matter of theology to human religious consciousness, but his use of God and his revelation as *an unmediated premise* provides no escape from these problems. Barth's description of *the*

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[28] *PR*, 82; emphasis added; also see *GD*, 1:184; *RD*, 1:213; rev.; 'God's self-revelation intends to bring His knowledge into the human consciousness.'
[29] *RD*, 1:564, 565, 616,
[30] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Isabel Best et al., ed. Christian Gremmels et al., Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 8 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 428-429.

> *obedience of faith* as a venture shows, and his dispute with Scholz confirms, that a positive theory of revelation not only is not an alternative to subjectivism in theology, but is in fact *the furthest extreme of subjectivism made into a theological position*. Whereas other attempts to give theology a foundation in human terms sought support from common arguments, Barth's apparently so lofty objectivity about God and God's word turns out to rest on no more than *the irrational subjectivity of a venture of faith with no justification outside itself*.[31]

Although recent Barthian scholarship has refused the critique of Barth's theology of revelation as positivistic, we still need to reckon with the possibility that Pannenberg's criticism might be applicable to Bavinck's theology.[32]

We should, first of all, pinpoint the critical point of Pannenberg's argument. For Pannenberg, the main concern is about subjectivism. This reminds us of Henk van den Belt and Cornelis van der Kooi's comments on Bavinck's turn to the subject, which seems to characterise his theology as subjectivist.[33] By contrast, Pannenberg's critique can be formulated another way. If the revelation of God is considered as the axiomatic concepts and knowledge that are appropriated by humans in faith in an unmediated way, it gives rise to the question of the veracity of the experienced revelation. How can one convince others that these alleged revealed concepts and knowledge are not the results of human fantasy? Hence, the critique of revelatory positivism is centred on the rejection of the reality of the knowledge experienced by the subjective human faith (the believing consciousness). Given this, Bavinck's exemption from this critique relies upon his notion of believing consciousness, namely faith.

Bavinck maintains that faith has the religious and intellectual dimensions as indicated in chapter 3. More importantly, to his mind, these two dimensions are correlative. He contends:

> Believing is an act of the mind, an immediate—unmediated by proofs—connection of the consciousness to revelation. But that faith *presupposes* a change in the relation of the whole person to God: it *presupposes regeneration*, the *transformation* of the will.[34]

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[31] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 272-273; emphasis added. J. Wentzel van Huyssteen's earlier criticism of Barth's revelatory positivism sides with Pannenberg's argument; see J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology*, trans. H. F. Snijders (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 19, 22.

[32] On the refutation of the critique of Barth's revelatory positivism, see D. Paul La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality: Critical Realism in Theology* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 152-179.

[33] H. Van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 294; Cornelis Van der Kooi, "The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, especially in H. Bavinck," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 2, no. 2 (2008): 107-108.

[34] *GD*, 1:561; *RD*, 1:591; rev.; emphasis added. Bavinck equates mind with consciousness somewhere; see *RD*, 1:565; 2:328;

It is evident that while speaking of the experience of the revealed knowledge by faith (the intellectual dimension of faith), Bavinck has presupposed the already-accomplished regeneration, which brings about the new relations of humans to God (the religious dimension of faith). In this light, the new relation comes into being prior to the experience of revelation.

Here lies the pivotal point of Bavinck's conception of consciousness. For Bavinck, the human consciousness is never identical to the soul. Instead, he argues more than once that 'the soul is much richer and deeper than the consciousness (Ps. 44:21; Prov. 4:23; Jer. 17:9–10; 1 Cor. 14:25; 1 Pet. 3:4; etc.).'[35] What is more, he maintains that

> [w]ithout our will or knowledge, all of that unconscious [dimension] affects our conscious life and gives direction and guidance. … our conscious life is continuously born by and animated by the unconscious. … all our convictions in religion, morality, science, the arts; our insights and prejudices, our sympathies and aversions—these all are rooted far and deep behind the consciousness in our soul.[36]

Combining this statement with the dual conceptual dimension of faith, it could be argued that the human experience of revelation, which consists in the consciousness, is preceded by the regeneration of the human soul, which is God's work that happens in the unconscious layer.[37] Then, the experience of revelation 'is continuously … animated by the unconscious' aspect of the regenerate soul. Thus, it is not the human consciousness that dominates the experience of revelation, that is, the communication of revelation to humans. Rather, it is God who makes the human being capable of experiencing revelation.[38] This also construes Bavinck's saying that revelation *generates* human faith, the believing consciousness.[39]

It suffices to say, therefore, that while affirming the positive character of revelation, Bavinck by no means upholds a positivistic stand, which restricts human knowing within the confines of the perceptible world and undermines the possibility of metaphysics and idealism.

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[35] Bavinck, "The Unconscious," 197. Bavinck argues that it is Descartes who 'was the first to identify the soul with consciousness.' Then, the soul is no longer 'the life principle'; 181.
[36] Bavinck, "The Unconscious," 186.
[37] Bavinck points out that God's regenerative work in the conscious does not draw due attention in dogmatics; *RD*, 4:73.
[38] La Montagne defends Barth's theology of revelation in a similar way, but he stresses the actualistic character: 'The reality of revelation and the justification of the assumption of revelation as a starting point for theological reflection depend upon the power of revelation to assert itself in the knowing relation. For Barth that power is the simple sovereignty of God, exercised in grace'; La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality*, 116. Nonetheless, Barth and Bavinck differs in many aspects of the doctrine of revelation; Ximian Xu, "Herman Bavinck's 'Yes' and Karl Barth's 'No': Constructing a Dialectic-in-Organic Approach to the Theology of General Revelation," *Modern Theology* 35, no. 2 (2019): 323-351; Ximian Xu, "Appreciative and Faithful? Karl Barth's Use of Herman Bavinck's View of God's Incomprehensibility," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 13, no. 1 (2019): 26-46.
[39] Cf. *RD*, 1:91.

In fact, he resolutely rejects positivism.[40] Underlying Bavinck's insistence on the experience of revelation is the active communication of God, the initiator of revelation. *This means that the objective reality of God and His revelation (both the general and the special) has ontological priority over the subjective human experience*.

> Experience comes into being only when, first, there exists something to experience, and afterwards this something is really experienced; it cannot otherwise exist. Religion is without doubt a matter of the heart; but it cannot be separated from all objective knowledge of God through his revelation in nature and history, in Scripture and conscience. A subjective religion is always preceded by an objective religion, whatever this may be.[41]

Moreover, Bavinck adopts the Trinitarian language to unveil the kernel of the positivity of revelation, saying: 'it is God alone who from *his divine consciousness* and by way of his creatures conveys the knowledge of truth to our mind—*the Father who by the Son and in the Spirit reveals himself to us*.'[42] Bruce Pass rightly remarks: '[i]n the writings of Herman Bavinck, self-consciousness is in essence a revelational concept. It constitutes a pale reflection of God's Triune self-consciousness … This is why the direct, immediate, and revelatory experience of human self-consciousness gives rise not only to the apprehension of self and the external world, but also of God himself.'[43] Therefore, believing consciousness, namely faith, is the organ rather than the source of knowledge.[44]

C. Summary

The analysis hereunto leads to a confirmative conclusion that Bavinck's revelationalism is positive but not positivistic.[45] Only on this basis can one properly comprehend Bavinck's

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[40] Chapter 3, II.A.
[41] *PR*, 208.
[42] *RD*, 1:233; *GD*, 1:207; emphasis added. Another Trinitarian formulation of the entry of revelation into the human consciousness can be found in *RD*, 1:214; *GD*, 1:185-186. Elsewhere, Bavinck describes the communication from the divine consciousness to the human consciousness by the language of divine accommodation; *RD*, 1:212; *GD*, 1:184. Bavinck argues that the incarnation is primarily representative of the divine accommodation; *RD*, 2:99-103. On Bavinck's view of divine accommodation, also see Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 273-278.
[43] Bruce Pass, "Herman Bavinck and the Cogito," *Reformed Theological Review* 74, no. 1 (2015): 32.
[44] See chapter 3, A and B.b.
[45] In this regard, one can find Barth as parallel to Bavinck. Barth's debate with Henrich Scholz's view of scientific character of theology is reflective of Barth's opposition to subjecting theology to logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, to which Scholz showed sympathy, though whether Barth offered a correct reading of Scholz's writings are under debate. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Volume I: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 1*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley, 2nd ed., ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 8-10; Gijsbert van den Brink, *Philosophy of Science for Theologians: An Introduction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 29-30. Some scholars maintain that it is reductionist to identify Scholz's point of view merely as logic positivist; Arie L. Molendijk, *Aus dem Dunklen ins Helle: Wissenschaft und Theologie im Denken von Heinrich Scholz* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 53; Arie L.

saying that 'dogmatics is a *positive science*, gets all its material from revelation, and does not have the right to modify or expand that content by speculation apart from that revelation.'[46] In ascribing positivity to theology, Bavinck's ultimate intention is to shed light on the economy of the revelation of the Triune God, who is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. On the Trinitarian foundation, Bavinck's positive revelationalism yields another four rationales, which are in turn united with it and form the singular grammar of scientific theology.

III. Theological Organicism

As has been argued at the outset of the thesis, Eglinton's new reading of Bavinck's use of the organic motif has become the industry standard in the field of Bavinck's studies.[47] The core principle of the new interpretative paradigm is 'The Trinity *ad intra* leads to organism *ad extra*.'[48] Having in mind the Trinitarian character of organicism *and* the nature of positive revelationalism, a syllogism can be formulated as follows:

(1) Of the Triune work *ad extra*, revelation is an organism in which the Triune God manifests Himself.[49]

(2) As the *principium*, revelation—in Scripture, nature and history—is connected to theology organically.[50]

(3) Thus, the edifice of scientific theology is organic in terms of both its essence and apparatus.

What is more, we need to recall the fourfold principle of Bavinck's definition of the organic: (1) the simultaneity of unity and diversity in creation; (2) the priority of unity over diversity; (3) the common idea orchestrating the organism's shared life; (4) the definite *telos* laid down by God's wisdom. While considering organism as characteristic of scientific theology, one should recognise that these four principles underly the definition of the organic

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Molendijk, "Heinrich Scholz – Karl Barth. Een Discussie over de Wetenschappelijkheid van de Theologie," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 39, no. 4 (1985): 295-313, particularly 306.

[46] *RD*, 1:44; *GD*, 1:20; emphasis added. It should be noted that Bavinck does not belittle the function of reason in articulating theology, though reason is differentiated from human consciousness. In short, reason is a discursive process that constructs scientific theology according to the data experienced in revelation by faith. On this, see Bruce Pass, "Revelation and Reason in Herman Bavinck," *Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 2 (2018): 237-260. Pass's article is intended to amplify Heideman's analysis; Eugene Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason in E. Brunner and H. Bavinck* (Assen: Van Gorcum, Prakke & Prakke, 1959).

[47] Chapter one, II.C.

[48] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 68, 72, 80, 81, 151, 156, 168, 170, 179, 200, 205.

[49] Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, 61. *RD*, 2:318; *GD*, 2:285. On revelation as organic, see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 37-43; Xu, "Herman Bavinck's 'Yes' and Karl Barth's 'No'," 9-12.

[50] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 267. Bavinck prefers *principium* to *bron* insofar as the latter indicates a mechanical relationship.

rationale of scientific theology. *This means that scientific theology has its parts (various theological loci) united organically as a whole that is orchestrated and guided by the common idea (the dogma of the knowledge of God) and develops towards the appointed end (the glorification of God).*

A. Unity-in-Diversity and Diversity-in-Unity

From early on in his career, Bavinck was particularly attentive to the first two aspects of the organicism—the simultaneity of unity and diversity, and the priority of unity over diversity—in theology. Before arguing for a dogmatic system in 'Het voor en tegen van een dogmatisch system' (1881), for example, Bavinck unveils the fact that system or unity is not unique to theology but rather pertains to the entire cosmos by virtue of it being God's creation. From this tenet, it follows that 'all things are oriented toward each other, exist together in an unbreakable connection, together constitute a system, an organism.'[51] Moreover, 'the whole precedes the parts, and supplies each part with its own function within the whole.'[52] Having defined the character of the organism in general, Bavinck moves on to construe the organicity of theology and dogmatics. He contends:

> But then the primary requirement for our thinking mind is that the church's dogmas do not stand disconnected alongside one another, but *they must be contained within one another*; that together they constitute *an unbreakable whole*, *an organic unity*, a true and complete system. … A dogmatic system is the requirement that science places upon theology, and it is the proof of the reasonableness, of the *genuinely scientific nature*, of Christianity.[53]

Three observations stand out concerning the statement above. First, no dogma can be considered as a discrete component of theology. The 'organic interconnectedness of dogmatics' always catches Bavinck's attention.[54] Second, 'the genuinely scientific nature' of the Christian faith is tied to the organic unity of theology. Bavinck's sentiment here is concerned with his contention that Christianity is the first to illuminate to us the truth of the organic unity or oneness of the world, of humankind and of science.[55] As such, theology's organicity and scientificity are inseparable; neither can their bond be broken. Third, a dogmatic system is characterised by the organic unity of dogmas. As has been indicated in the preceding chapter,

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[51] *PCDS*, 90.
[52] *PCDS*, 91.
[53] *PCDS*, 95; emphasis added.
[54] *RD*, 1:94; *GD*, 1:71. In contrary to interconnectedness is the notion of aggregate, which is characteristic of the inorganic; *RD*, 2:390, 392, 524; *PCDS*, 91.
[55] Bavinck, "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap (1887)," 197.

the term "dogma" is reflective of an ecclesial confession.[56] Hence, dogmatics is the Church's expression of its confession as an organic whole. More importantly, the scientificity and organic unity of theology are ultimately grounded in the God who has revealed Himself. Bavinck argues:

> Our God himself provides us with an even infinitely higher and richer and more glorious system, to behold and admire, he who is one in essence, in three persons, in whom the one identically complete essence dwells hypostatically in a threefold manner. He, the Triune One, shows us in himself the entirely perfect system: origin, type, model, and image of all other systems.[57]

This thinking is reiterated in *Reformed Dogmatics*: 'For if the knowledge of God has been revealed by himself in his Word, it cannot contain contradictory elements or be in conflict with what is known of God from nature and history. God's thoughts cannot be opposed to one another and thus necessarily [form] an organic unity.'[58] To sum up, the unity-in-diversity and the diversity-in-unity of the organism of scientific theology is grounded in the divine Triunity. Inasmuch as dogmatics is the science of God, it must mirror the divine threeness-in-oneness and oneness-in-threeness. Meanwhile, the precedence of unity to diversity is reflective of the dogmatician's task, which is 'to think God's thoughts after him and to trace their unity.'[59]

B. The Common Idea in Theological Organism

The third aspect of the organic character of scientific theology—the common idea in organism—involves with the dogma of the knowledge of God. In the earlier explication of the third defining aspect of scientific theology—namely, the divine object-defining character—it has been illustrated that the knowledge of God, the ectype of God's self-knowledge, is the only or highest dogma, from which scientific theology proceeds, and by which dogmas are organised into an organic unity.[60] Since the ectypal knowledge of God is presented in divine revelation, and since the revelation is the outward manifestation of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, the highest dogma in the organism of scientific theology is the knowledge of the Triune God. This corollary coincides with the rationale that the Trinity *ad intra* leads to organism *ad extra*. In this light, the idea of the Triune God orchestrates all other dogmas as an organism that

[56] *RD*, 1:30-31; *GD*, 1:5-6.
[57] *PCDS*, 92.
[58] *RD*, 1:44; *GD*, 1:20.
[59] *RD*, 1:44; *GD*, 1:21.
[60] Chapter 3, IV.B.c.

is grounded in the divine Triunity. Hence, this idea is '[t]he only true principle of the dogmatic system.'[61]

This construal places the dogma of the knowledge of God at the centre of the organism of scientific theology, which gives rise to the question of the theological centrality of Christology in Bavinck's theological system. This issue is exacerbated in comprehending Bavinck's saying that '[i]n Christ, in the middle of history, God created an organic center; from this center, in an ever widening [*steeds wijder*] sphere, God drew the circles within which the light of revelation shines.'[62] Notwithstanding that the statement is indicative of Bavinck's view of history, it cannot be separated from his theology of revelation and thus is related to the organism of scientific theology radically. Bavinck maintains that God 'works out his own councils in the course of the world' and history is 'rooted in revelation and … upborne by revelation.'[63] Therefore, as revelation is *principium* of and is thus organically connected to scientific theology, an inference can be drawn that Christocentrism is characteristic of scientific theology. This Christocentric stand seems to be affirmatively proved by Bavinck's sentiment—which appears in both the first and second editions of *Reformed Dogmatics*—that '[t]he doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the midpoint of the whole dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it.'[64] On this statement, one would arrive at the estimation that there seems to be some incongruity within the development of Bavinck's theology.

In order to tackle this *prima facie* irreconcilable paradox, I proceed to engage with Bruce Pass's thesis, which contends that Christology is 'the trunk of Bavinck's system from which all the other dogmas branch out.'[65] Pass's main argument is articulated on the basis of his taxonomy of the developmental stages of Bavinck's theology according to the positions of Christology and the dogma of the knowledge of God therein, as presented in the table below.

	Starting Point	**Midpoint/Centre**	**Central Dogma**
First Stage: Before *Reformed Dogmatics* (1895)	Dogma of the Knowledge of God	Dogma of the Knowledge of God	Dogma of the Knowledge of God

[61] *PCDS*, 96.
[62] *RD*, 1:383; *GD*, 1:355; also see *PR*, 141.
[63] *PR*, 135.
[64] *GD*, 3:254; *RD*, 3:274; rev.; Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, derde deel, eerste druk (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1898), 253.
[65] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 5.

Second Stage: 1895-1901	Dogma of the Knowledge of God	Christology	Dogma of the Knowledge of God
Third Stage After 1901	Christology	Christology	Christology

Table 2: Pass's Taxonomy of the Developmental Stages[66]

The first phasic shift taking place by 1895 is characterised by the conceptual differentiation between the midpoint of dogmatics and the central dogma. In that period, Bavinck's view of revelation was characterised as historical.[67] Hence, he argued that given that Christ is at the (organic) centre of revelation, Christology should be the midpoint of dogmatics, not the starting point.[68] The second shift first appeared in *The Sacrifice of Praise* (1901).[69] Pass asserts that Bavinck then adopted 'the centripetal structure of a deductive system' to erase the earlier conceptual contradiction between starting point and midpoint.[70]

Pass's thesis is doubtless remarkable. It challenges us with the question: How shall we handle the competition between the dogma of the knowledge of God, on the one hand, and Christology, on the other? To formulate the question differently: Which dogma is the only true principle or common idea of the organism of dogmatic theology? I proceed to handle the question by enriching Pass's thesis in two respects.

First, Bavinck's theology of revelation does not only have a horizontal latitude—that is, the salvation-historical character, as maintained by Pass—but it also implies a vertical latitude, which is centred on the reality of the incarnation—that is, the vertical movement of the Second Person of the Trinity from heaven to earth, from the infinite to the finite, from the noumenal to the phenomenal. Indeed, a vertical element has been implied in Pass's thesis: 'Christ, although standing at the centre of time, functions as a kind of portal for the infinite and therefore constitutes the beginning, middle, and end of all things.'[71] Yet Pass does not unfold the vertical latitude in detail. In several places in his writings, Bavinck unambiguously mentions the simultaneity of the horizontal and vertical latitudes. One outstanding instance is presented in

[66] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 26-38; Pass's crucial analysis of the shift of the central dogma in Bavinck's theological system also appears in Bruce Pass, "The Question of Central Dogma in Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 53, no. 1 (2018): 33-63.
[67] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 20-21.
[68] *RD*, 1:110; *GD*, 1:87.
[69] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 34; Herman Bavinck, *De Offerande des Lofs: Overdenkingen vóór en na de toelating tot het heilige avondmaal* ('S Gravenhage: Fred. H. Verschoor, 1901); Herman Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise: Meditations before and after Admission to the Lord's Supper*, ed. and trans. Cameron Clausing and Gregory Parker (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2019).
[70] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 45.
[71] *Ibid.*

Our Reasonable Faith. There, Bavinck writes: 'The deeds of God form a circle which mounts upward in the form of a spiral; they represent a harmony of the *horizontal* and the *vertical* line; they move *upwards* and *forwards* at the same time.'[72] In spite of Syd Hielema's soteriological reading of this statement, its immediate context is concerning the confession of the Trinity and His deeds in creation, which of course includes His salvation as well as revelation.[73] Elsewhere, Bavinck argues: '[The doctrine of the world] is to be regarded both *horizontally* and *vertically*. From the lowest forms of life it strives *upward* to where the light and life of God is, and at the same time it moves *forward* to a God-glorifying end.'[74] The immediate context of this statement is Bavinck's discourse on the doctrine of creation, the kernel of which consists in the sentiment that '[c]reation is the initial act and foundation of all divine revelation.'[75] Both statements above clearly present the vertical latitude of revelation in Bavinck's thought. Note that for Bavinck 'the central fact of revelation' is nothing other than the incarnation.[76] In this sense, the vertical latitude corresponds to Bavinck's view of the vertical movement of the incarnation, 'in the course of which [Christ] descended *from heaven to earth*.'[77]

Apart from the direct usage of the term "vertical," the vertical latitude of revelation is intrinsic to Bavinck's theology of archetype-ectype.[78] In his concluding remarks on the archetypal and ectypal knowledge of God, Bavinck particularly underscores the vertical latitude of revelation by the language of "God has to come down to the level of his creatures" and "condescension."[79] A similar expression occurs later on: 'Every vision of God, then, always requires an act of divine condescension (συγκαταβασις), a revelation by which God on his part comes down to us and makes himself knowable.'[80] For Bavinck, the best representative of this act of condescension is the incarnation.[81]

Both the direct use of the term "vertical" and the implied vertical meaning in texts prove that the vertical latitude of revelation in essence pertains to the incarnation. This also features in Calvin's theology. Early in 1536, Calvin has stated that 'descending to earth, he has prepared

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[72] Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), 144. This statement is omitted in Pass's thesis.
[73] Hielema, "Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption," 127-128, 215, 233, 264.
[74] *RD*, 2:426; *GD*, 2:400. This argument is also left out in Pass's thesis.
[75] *RD*, 2:407; *GD*, 2:370.
[76] *RD*, 1:344, 380, 434.
[77] *RD*, 3:411; *GD*, 3:402.
[78] Pass's thesis does not probe this point, though it explores Bavinck's thought of archetype-ectype somewhere.
[79] *RD*, 2:110; *GD*, 2:79.
[80] *RD*, 2:190; *GD*, 2:157.
[81] See *RD*, 2:100, 3:277, 3:411; also see 1:310.

an ascent to heaven for us.'[82] Although Calvin was speaking of the sacraments, this idea was clearly related to his view of the human knowledge of God, which can be illustrated by his later writings. In the final edition of *Institutes*, while offering an explanation to the incarnation, Calvin argues: 'Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a Mediator.' Hence, he maintains that Christ's descending to human beings has made it possible that humans ascend to God.[83] To express Bavinck's idea of scientific theology in Calvin's language, it can be argued that the vertical latitude of revelation enables scientific dogmatics to reach the knowledge of God in the incarnate Mediator. This is thoroughly resonant with Bavinck's claim that, 'The purpose of revelation is not Christ; Christ is the center and the means; the purpose is that God will again dwell in his creatures and reveal his glory in the cosmos: θεος τα παντα εν πασιν.'[84]

If we examine the shift of the starting point, midpoint and central dogma of Bavinck's system from this vantage point, the seeming competition between the dogma of the knowledge of God and Christology can be removed. The vertical latitude of revelation accentuates that '[t]he end returns to the beginning and yet is at the same time the apex which is exalted high above the point of origin.'[85] With this point of gravity, we fuse together the variants of the oft-appeared idea of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, such like "God in Christ Jesus" (1883),[86] "the knowledge of God in Christ" (1894),[87] "the knowledge of God revealed in the face of Christ Jesus" (1899/1902),[88] and "revealed in his Word" (1895/1899/1906)[89]. It can be perceived that this idea crosses over the three stages as delimited by Pass. This then leads to a conclusion that although the starting point and midpoint have changed in the course of the development of Bavinck's theology, these two points overlap materially from the downward angle due to the existence of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. This verdict sheds light on

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[82] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), IV.24.
[83] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Volume 1&2*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), II.xii.1. Canlis demonstrates the Trinitarian character of the movements of Christ's descending and ascending; Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 92.
[84] *RD*, 1:380; *GD*, 1:104.
[85] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 144.
[86] *WHG*, 29.
[87] Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Raymond VanLeeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (1989): 51.
[88] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 86-87, 97; Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 8-9, 21; Herman Bavinck, *Het Doctorenambt* (Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1899), 6.
[89] *RD*, 1:38; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Eerste deel, Eerste druk*, 49; also see Bavinck, *Doctorenambt*, 5.

Bavinck's contention in 1881 (during the first stage, as identified by Pass) that the incarnation of the Word is the 'fundamental principle of all sciences'.[90]

It is worth noting that the concept of the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ proves the development of Bavinck's theology. Meanwhile, I endorse Pass's taxonomy of three stages yet seek for the causes of the shifts that took place in 1895 and 1901. Pass has implicitly pointed out the cause of the first shift. He detects that in composing the first edition of *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck was convinced that the theological system should be characterised by ontological, rather than the epistemological, order.[91] Therefore, although Christ is at the centre of revelation, the knowledge of the Triune God still remains the starting point and the fundamental principle of dogmatics. In this light, the first shift was indicative of the actualisation of Bavinck's dogmatic system, which caught his attention in his writings before the completion of *Reformed Dogmatics* in 1895.[92] In short, the first shift was of necessity and considerable significance for Bavinck to work out a dogmatic system.

The second shift was, if not entirely, occasioned by the religious and intellectual contexts that marked at the turn of the twentieth century. In the year of this shift, Bavinck's *Schepping of Ontwikkeling* (Creation or Development) (1901) was published, which begins with an account of his milieu:

> Unless we are mistaken in our interpretation of the signs of the times, the twentieth century, upon which we have just entered, is to witness a gigantic conflict of spirits. Faith and unbelief … is the deepest theme of the history of the world. … And this it will be above all things else and in an entirely special sense in the twentieth century, which has just disclosed itself to us. … in the spiritual conflict which is now waging in every part of the civilized world, the points at issue more and more are *the principles of Christianity itself*, and the very fundamentals of *all religion and of all morality*.[93]

As mentioned in chapter 2 that supernaturalism was reintroduced by young moderns or malcontents at the turn of the twentieth century, Bavinck thus sought for, as per George Harinck's argument, a theistic coalition with his modernist colleagues to withstand the threats

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[90] Herman Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *TBR* 2 (2011): 146-147. Pass's thesis does not take this contention into account.
[91] *RD*, 1:529; Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 43.
[92] Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 105-106.
[93] Herman Bavinck, "Creation or Development," trans. J. Hendrik de Vries, *Methodist Review* 17, no. 6 (1901): 849; emphasis added; Herman Bavinck, *Schepping of Ontwikkeling* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1901), 7-8.

to religion.[94] One should not neglect a concomitant concern of Bavinck's theology, that is, the essence of Christianity.

Bavinck's 'Het Wezen des Christendoms' (The Essence of Christianity) (1906) was his response to Adolf von Harnack's lectures of *Das Wesen des Christentums*.[95] Bavinck hence contends that '[t]he question about the essence of Christianity first arose in rather recent times.'[96] Nonetheless, Eglinton reminds us that Bavinck's ultimate objective was to wrestle with 'the age of Nietzsche', in which 'Nietzsche's deathly shadow was cast upon Christians of every stripe' so that there were only two sharply conflicting worldviews—the theistic and the atheistic.[97] The correlation of theistic coalition and the question of the essence of Christianity was caused by 'a breach … between church dogma and personal faith' and his contemporaries' disagreement 'with that view of Christianity that was honored in the confession and worship of the church.'[98] In other words, Bavinck could not compromise the essence of the Christian faith for the sake of the theistic coalition. Alternatively, he reinforced the stand that the 'person of Christ determines the essence of Christianity.'[99] By doing so, I surmise, Bavinck probably intended to draw the coalition's border lines between Christianity and the other religions. Then, Christology should be brought to the foreground, whereas the dogma of the knowledge of God fades into the background. This means that in the third stage the dogma of the knowledge of God, standing behind Christology, becomes the latent fundamental principle or common idea of Bavinck's theological organism. This explains why Bavinck retained in the second edition of *Reformed Dogmatics* volume 2, which was published in 1908 (the third stage), the exact same contestation found in the first edition:

> From the very start of its labors, it faces the incomprehensible One. From him it derives its inception, for from him are all things. But also in the remaining loci, when it turns its attention to creatures, it views them only in relation to God as they exist from him and through him and for him [Rom. 11:36]. So then, the knowledge of God is the only dogma, the exclusive content, of the entire field of dogmatics. All the doctrines treated in dogmatics … are but the explication of the one central

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[94] Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 74-76. Harinck draws on Herman Bavinck, *Het Christendom*, Groote godsdiensten, vol. II/7 (Baarn: Hollandia-drukkerij, 1912), 61-62. Also see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 227.

[95] Herman Bavinck, "Het Wezen des Christendoms," in *Almanak van het studentencorps der Vrije Universiteit voor het jaar 1906* (Amsterdam: Herdes, 1906), 251-277. Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1900).

[96] Bavinck, "The Essence of Christianity," 33.

[97] Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 226, 241-242. It is interesting that Gordon Graham suggests similarly that Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation* should be read against Nietzsche's philosophy and influence thereof; Gordon Graham, "Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation*," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 45-46.

[98] Bavinck, "The Essence of Christianity," 37.

[99] Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise*, 43.

> dogma of the knowledge of God. All things are considered in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as the starting point.[100]

This contextual understanding of the second shift also coincides with Bavinck's later argument that '[a]ll these objective means of revelation reaches their high point and also possesses their *centre* in the person of Christ who is the *highest* appearance of God.'[101]

The analysis hitherto illuminates that the dogma of the knowledge of God is the common idea of Bavinck's theological organism in the course of the development of Christology in his dogmatic methodology. To describe it in Eglinton's language, Bavinck provides a 'one-track' dogmatics, that is, dogmatics that operates by 'thinking *pros ton theon*.'[102] Granted, this dogma became latent, namely moving from the foreground to the background, in the course of the systematisation and development of Bavinck's scientific theology. Also granted, Bavinck failed to explain and straighten out his arguments clearly and then transition well from the second stage to the third stage. Nonetheless, the principle that the knowledge of God is revealed in Jesus Christ rules out the rivalry between the dogma of the knowledge of God and Christology. It is always the dogma of the knowledge of God that orchestrates all *loci* as an organic whole. 'Thus dogmatics is, and can only exist as, the scientific system of the knowledge of God.'[103]

C. The Growth of Scientific Theology unto the *Telos*

The fourth aspect of organicism—the development of organism unto the appointed end––is indicative of the expansion, enrichment and development of scientific theology. Bavinck has accounted for this point early in his career. He writes:

> The theological science therein is evident to be an organism, which gradually grows up and naturally develops. It is explained and unfolded more and more, which is understood in that name. It became and becomes clearer increasingly, which could and can be recognised much more as part of the doctrine of God in a

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[100] *RD*, 2:29; *GD*, 2:2; Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Tweede deel, Eerste druk* (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1897), 1.
[101] Herman Bavinck, *Handleiding bij het Onderwijs in den Christelijken Godsdienst* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1913), 9; emphasis added. Again, Pass's thesis does not examine this argument.
[102] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 99. Eglinton's description of Bavinck's one-track dogmatics is grounded in Bavinck's notion of mystery; see 95-100.
[103] *RD*, 1:38; *GD*, 1:13. Interestingly, John Webster argues in a similar way: 'A systematic theology cannot be arranged simply as a string of topics; rather, "the formal interest engaged" that is, the question of the relation of all these topics to the doctrine of God must determine the arrangement.' Webster, *Domain of the Word*, 145. Bruce Pass has indicated that Webster's later works betray his appreciation of Bavinck's theology; Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 189, note 34; on Pass's comparison between Bavinck and Webster, see 189-192.

> narrower sense than before. The subjects, taught under this name, continue to expand in number and scale.[104]

Accordingly, scientific theology is dynamic rather than static. As has been indicated in the preceding chapter, the expansion of theology is predicated on the dispensation now underway, namely, that of the Holy Spirit.[105] Later on, I will explain that the expansion and development of scientific theology is also related to Bavinck's organically critical realism.

Bavinck argues that the development of theology has its own end. He contends: 'God reveals himself for his own sake: to delight in the glorification of his own attributes.'[106] Inasmuch as theology is grounded in God's self-revelation, Bavinck asserts that the goal of theology is the glory of God.[107] Given the ecclesial character of dogma, Bavinck writes: 'Every dogmatics ought to be in full accord with and a part of the doxology sung to God by the church of all ages.'[108] As will be seen in the next chapter, this doxological goal rounds off Bavinck's grammar of scientific theology.

D. Summary

The discourse above has evidenced the interior organicity of Bavinck's scientific theology. That is, Bavinck's theology is not an aggregate but an organism, being constitutive of interconnected theological *loci*, which is united organically as a whole. Moreover, despite the development of Bavinck's dogmatic thinking (particularly Christology) and the changes of his milieu, this theological organism is always orchestrated by the dogma of the knowledge of God, no matter whether this is so apparently or latently, and develops towards a particular doxological end.

This interior organicity is generative and then shapes the exterior organicity of theology. To put it another way, scientific theology is not insular. Rather, it must have connection to the other sciences. In this regard, a Kuyperian influence on Bavinck should not be ignored, which made him different from some of his fellow seceders. With Kuyper, Bavinck contends that theology should be practised in the university rather than merely in a private seminary (as some seceders of his denomination has claimed). As will be seen in chapter 6, Bavinck and Lucas

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[104] *WHG*, 22; Dutch original: 'De Theol. wetenschap blijkt daarin een organisme te zijn, dat allengs opwast en alzoo normaal zich ontwikkelt. Altijd meer legt zich uit en ontvouwt zich, wat in dien naam is begrepen. Het werd en wordt steeds duidelijker, dat tot de Leer van God in engeren zin nog veel meer behoort, dan vroeger ingezien werd en worden kon. De vakken, onder dien naam gedoceerd, gaan nog steeds voort in aantal en omvang zich uit te breiden.'
[105] *WHG*, 47.
[106] *RD*, 1:346; *GD*, 1:318.
[107] *RD*, 1:614; *GD*, 1:583.
[108] *RD*, 1:86; *GD*, 1:62.

Lindeboom (1845-1933), his colleague at the Theological School in Kampen, were in conflict in this regard. For Bavinck, '[b]ecause the universe is God's creation, it is also his *revelation* and *self-manifestation*. There is not an atom of the world that does not reflect his deity.'[109] As a result, theology should have a dialogue with the other sciences by virtue of its own organicity grounded in the Triune God. That being so, the organicity of scientific theology should show the proactive gesture towards its relationship with the other sciences.

IV. Organically Critical Realism

Realism is a philosophy or view of the world and life that upholds reality (*contra* subjective idealism), grounds knowledge in experience, and regards experience as a trustworthy path to the nature of reality. In general, it can be categorised into two groups: naïve realism and critical realism. Naïve realism holds that human experience and perception can directly attain the knowledge of objective reality.[110] By contrast, critical realism stresses the role that the human mind plays in attaining the knowledge of reality, which is mediated to humans and grasped through a creative and critical interpretation of what is experienced.[111]

Although the definitions of naïve and critical realism are associated with natural science, Bavinck's idea of twofold science allows us to deploy the notion of critical realism here. Moreover, the discourse above on Bavinck's positive revelationalism and the organicity of theology shows that his scientific theology is a kind of critical realism in a general sense. On the one hand, Bavinck accentuates the reality of God and His revelation, and underscores the import of human experience and consciousness to our appropriation God's revelation. On the other hand, Bavinck's construction of an organic system of dogmatics evidences an intellectual effort in assimilating the knowledge of God which is experienced in revelation and mediated by the human consciousness.[112]

Nonetheless, the term "critical realism" is too broad to display theologically and fully the quintessence, logic and metanarrative of Bavinck's scientific theology. By the qualifier "organically", my intention is to theologise the term "critical realism" so as to demonstrate the

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[109] *RD*, 2:109; *GD*, 2:78; emphasis added.
[110] See Arthur Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 15.
[111] See J. C. Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (London: SPCK, 2000), 79; J. C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology: An Introduction* (London: Fortress Press, 1998), 16-17; La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality*, 15-16.
[112] Sutanto's thesis mentions the term "critical realism" thrice without a clear definition; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 9, 145. Sutanto argues that the term "critical realism" does not convey the deep meaning of Bavinck's epistemology unless adding two prerequisites: '(1) the mind plays a constructive role with respect to knowing, and (2) reality remains reliably communicated in perception' (145). The definitions and analysis offered in this study are adequate to justify my designation of Bavinck's realism as critical.

realistic constituents of Bavinck's grammar of scientific theology. In what follows, I will explicate *organically* critical realism and organically *critical* realism successively.

A. *Organically* Critical Realism: The Organic Correspondence between Subjective and Objective Revelation

One significant meaning of organically critical realism consists in the adverb "organically". This means that for Bavinck organicity is characteristic of the critical interpretation of the experienced revelation. As has been indicated above, Bavinck emphasises the correspondence between subject and object in the human appropriation of revelation. This correspondence is crucial for theology and the other sciences alike. Bavinck's concern about the balance between subject and object has already occurred in his early writings. In 'Geloofswetenschap' (1880), Bavinck constantly laid emphasis on the simultaneity of objectively certain knowledge and subjective belief.[113] Likewise, in 'Het Geweten' (Conscience) (1881), he contended that 'the subjective rule of our life must be brought increasingly into agreement with the objective one made known to us in God's revelation.'[114] As such, Bavinck was attentive to and critical of the blending of subject and object in modern philosophy, particularly in Schelling's idealistic philosophy of the perfect unity of spirit and matter and Hegel's absolute idealism.[115] Meanwhile, he expressly appreciated the Ethical theologians' insights into the requirement of the balance of the subject and object of science.[116]

Later in *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck argues: 'Science always consists in a logical relation between subject and object. Our view of science depends on the way we relate the two.'[117] He presents his realism after his critique of rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism mistakenly stresses the human subject alone by arguing that the human thinking or mind is the source of knowledge, whereas empiricism accents sense perception such that the human consciousness is subject to the physical world. To Bavinck's mind, both rationalism and empiricism are unscientific due to their mishandling the correspondence between subject and object.[118]

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[113] Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 1-12.
[114] Herman Bavinck, "Conscience," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *TBR* 6 (2015): 126.
[115] Herman Bavinck, "De hedendaagsche wereldbeschouwing," *De Vrije Kerk* 10 (1883): 441-442.
[116] Herman Bavinck, "Gereformeerde Theologie," *De Vrije Kerk* 7 (1881): 502-503.
[117] *RD*, 1:214; *GD*, 1:186; also see *PR*, 49; *CWB*, 21; *CWV*, 38. Bavinck argues that the 'one who does not trust knowledge until he has been able to control that which is outside himself makes an impossible and absurd demand of knowing, precisely because knowing is always—and can never be other than—a relation between subject and object;' *CWB*, 19; *CWV*, 35.
[118] *RD*, 1:214-222.

As a particular science, theology displays this correspondence *par excellence*, which is characteristic of its scientificity insofar as the author of the correspondence is its object, namely God. Bavinck contends:

> Here, too, there is correspondence between the subject and the object. *There is revelation of God outside but also in human beings.* This revelation of God in human beings, however, is not an independent source of knowledge alongside of nature and history but serves as subjective organ to enable us to receive and understand the revelation of God in nature and history. *It is certain that there is an indwelling of God in every person, as much as but more strongly than in nature and history.* [119]

While illustrating positive revelationalism, it has been pointed out that Bavinck describes the correspondence between subject and object as the immediate human experience and awareness of God's revelation in the human consciousness. In the above statement, however, Bavinck vividly depicts this correspondence as the "indwelling of God in every person." Eugene Heideman argues that Bavinck's insistence on the close relationship of subject and object renders him unable 'to escape completely the pantheism which he fears and criticizes.'[120] In my view, Heideman's estimation is derivative of his omission of the organicity of the correspondence. Bavinck explicitly qualifies the correspondence between subject and object as organic. [121] Brian Mattson rightly notes that Bavinck's view of the correspondence is characterised by organicity, which is grounded in Bavinck's Trinitarian ontology. [122] As Bavinck argues,

> God is the first principle of being (*principium essendi*); present in his mind are the ideas of all things; all things are based on thoughts and are created by the word. It is his good pleasure, however, to reproduce in human beings made in his image an ectypal knowledge that reflects this archetypal knowledge (*cognitio archetypa*) in his own divine mind. He does this, not by letting us view the ideas in his being (Malebranche) or by passing them all on to us at birth (Plato, the theory of innate ideas), but by displaying them to the human mind in the works of his hands.[123]

Three observations are worth noting with regard to the statement above. First, by asserting that God is the *principium essendi*, Bavinck grounds the correspondence ultimately in God rather than the human being. By doing so, subjectivism and positivism are eradicated. Second, the correspondence between subjective and objective revelation is reflective of the archetype-

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[119] *RD*, 1:341; *GD*, 1:312-313; emphasis added.
[120] Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason in E. Brunner and H. Bavinck*, 144.
[121] Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," 116-117. Also see *RD*, 1:231.
[122] Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 56.
[123] *RD*, 1:233; *GD*, 1:206.

ectype model of the knowledge of God, which reaffirms the vertical latitude of God's revelation. Third, God has established the correspondence by His creating the human being after the *imago Dei*. This observation is of significance insofar as it derives another two points: (1) the essence of subjective revelation in the human consciousness; (2) the organic correspondence established by the Logos.

First, Bavinck argues that subjective revelation is reflective of human religiosity by virtue of the fact that the human being is created in God's image.[124] This means that the reality of God's creation of humans is the foundation of the human subjective appropriation of objective revelation. Bavinck's positive revelationalism has unveiled that this subjective appropriation consists in the human consciousness, which incorporates the cognitive capacity for God's revelation, both the general and the special.[125] This subjective capacity is crucial to such an extent that the human consciousness is '[t]he only path by which we are able to attain' the reality of God's revelation.[126] Therefore, the reality of God's creation safeguards human subjectivity in knowing God so that the correspondence between subjective and objective revelation will lapse neither into mechanism nor into divine determinism, both of which deny human volitional action. For Bavinck, the human subject is always active in appropriating God's revelation. This coincides with the third aspect of his definition of dogmatics, that is, its divine-human quality.[127]

Second, Bavinck maintains that the Logos is the architect of the correspondence between subjective and objective revelation.[128] 'It is one Logos that created both man and world in relation to each other and for each other.'[129] In terms of general epistemology, there is the

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[124] *RD*, 1:278; *GD*, 1:253.

[125] Bavinck argues that '[o]ne can call [the human religious propensity] by various names: "the seed of religion," "a sense of divinity" (Calvin), religious feeling (Schleiermacher, Opzoomer), belief (Hartmann), a feeling for infinity (Tiele), etc., but there is always in humans a certain capacity for perceiving the divine.' *RD*, 1:278; *GD*, 1:252. Hence, Bavinck repudiates the theory of the innate ideas; *RD*, 2:68-70.

[126] *PR*, 56.

[127] See chapter three, III.

[128] This Logosological view is also characteristic of Kuyper's view of the organic relationship between subject and object; see *EST*, 63-83; *EHG*, 2:8-29; also see Jacob Klapwijk, "Abraham Kuyper on Science, Theology and University," *Philosophia Reformata* 78 (2013): 18-46.

The role of the Logos in this correspondence seems not to be laid out in Bavinck's early writings. Indeed, the development of the role of the Logos in the correspondence is underexplored. Nonetheless, it could be assured that the idea of the Logos as the architect of the correspondence was shaped in Bavinck's preparation for *Reformed Dogmatics* by 1895.

[129] Bavinck, "Herman Bavinck's Foundations of Psychology," 75. Also see *RD*, 1:231. Wolter points out that Logosology is the common feature of the ontological framework of the early neo-Calvinists; Albert Wolters, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality," in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. Hendrik Hart, Johan van der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff (London: University Press of America, 1983), 126.

correspondence can be seen between the logos in the human mind and the logos in the phenomenal world, which is actualised via the Logos's enlightening of human reason (logos within).[130]

This correspondence sustained by the Logos's enlightening is prominent in Bavinck's account of scientific theology. For him, the correspondence between subjective and objective revelation is the work of the Triune God.[131] Here, we need to reckon with the difference between general and special revelation from the perspective of the role of the Logos.

> [Special Revelation:] The Holy Spirit is the great and powerful witness to Christ [the Logos], objectively in Scripture, subjectively in the human own spirit (*geest*). By that Spirit we receive a fitting organ [faith/believing consciousness] for the reception of external revelation.[132]
>
> [General Revelation:] it is the Logos himself who through our spirit bears witness to the Logos in the world. It is the one selfsame Spirit who objectively displays the truth to us and subjectively elevates it into certainty in our spirit. It is his witness given in our consciousness to the thoughts God embodied in the creatures around us.[133]

It is striking that in respect of scientific theology the correspondence posited by Bavinck between subject and object operates with a Spirit-Logos model. Bavinck seems to envisage a Spirit-Christology, as claimed by Cornelis van der Kooi, which complements a Logos-Christology and spells more fully out the identity and work of the Son from the angle of the work of the Holy Spirit.[134] Moreover, this Spirit-Logos model refrains scientific theology from collapsing into subjectivism because of the assumption of the existence of the self-revealed God and the human appropriation of divine revelation in faith.[135]

This Spirit-Logos model of the correspondence between subjective and objective revelation, however, gives rise to a question: What is the difference between general and special revelation? We need to recall what has already been set out—that is, the regeneration

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[130] *CW*, 37; *RD*, 1:586-589; *RD*, 1:232, 384; 2:69; 3:280; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 144-145. Further on Bavinck's Logos-epistemology, see O'Donnell, "'Bavinck's Bug' or 'Van Tilian' Hypochondria?," 139-171; O'Donnell's article examines Oliphint's critique of Bavinck's cognitive realism as conflating principium with method (152); see K. Scott Oliphint, "Bavinck's Realism, the Logos Principle, and *Sola Scriptura*," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 72, no. 2 (2010): 359-390.
[131] *RD*, 1:214.
[132] *GD*, 1:471; *RD*, 1:506; rev.
[133] *RD*, 1:587; *GD*, 1:557.
[134] Cornelis Van der Kooi, *This Incredibly Benevolent Force* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 22-70. It is apparent that Bavinck's Spirit-Logos model is free from Christopher Holmes's critique that a Spirit Christology 'is to confuse immanent processions and temporal missions' since 'word (and presence) is a function of identity and being'; Christopher R. J. Holmes, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 127-129.
[135] See chapter 3, IV.B.b.

taking place in the unconscious animates the understanding of the immediately experienced revelation in the human consciousness. This point of view is the key to our comprehension of the following statement by Bavinck:

> But the moment we *pass from the subconscious to the conscious level* and want to learn to know *the indwelling of God as a revelation*, we as subject are bound to the "object" around us and *ascend* by way of the creatures to the Creator (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 40:26; Rom. 1:20).[136]

It is apparent that the terms "indwelling", "creatures" and "Creator" can refer to general revelation, as further proved by the cited scriptural texts. This means that Bavinck relates the "pass from the subconscious to the conscious level" to the proper comprehension of general revelation, to having God as the object of our knowing, and to our ascension to God. Specifically, by the regenerative work, the Holy Spirit illumines the human consciousness (*becoming* the believing consciousness) to receive and comprehend God's general revelation through the lens of special revelation.[137] In this light, Richard Muller's point in his critique of Sutanto is justified. Muller points out that Sutanto's view of 'primordial and precognitive' general revelation neglects that in the period of early modern Reformed orthodoxy truth is 'the adequation of the mind to the thing and the most basic knowledge.' As such, revelation is 'intuitive and pre-ratiocinative' and can be 'expressed in propositional forms' (rather than 'pre-cognitive' or 'primordial'), which is activated in the human being through immediate experience.[138] In terms of scientific theology, this activation is embodied in the "pass from the subconscious to the conscious level." It requires the animation accomplished by the Spirit. Thereby, the Spirit is venerated as the *principia cognoscendi internum* of scientific theology.[139]

B. Organically *Critical* Realism: The Dispensation of the Holy Spirit

The work of the Holy Spirit not only underlies *organically* critical realism. It is also central to the nature of organically *critical* realism. In terms of the latter, the adjective "critical" is

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[136] *RD*, 1:341; *GD*, 1:313; emphasis.
[137] *RD*, 1:304, 384.
[138] Richard A. Muller, "Kuyper and Bavinck on Natural Theology," *TBR* 10 (2019): 23, note 67; 30-31; Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Neo-Calvinism on General Revelation: A Dogmatic Sketch," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20, no. 4 (2018): 495-516. For general epistemology, Muller argues against Sutanto that 'the mind has a capacity for knowledge that is "activated" by something external. Thus, common notions are better understood as implanted via an immediate apprehension.' It should be noted that Muller probably misreads Sutanto's view in that Sutanto's emphasis is on the conceptualisation of revelation *within* the human being. However, Muller's emphasis seems to be on the objective truth itself.
[139] *RD*, 1:384, 506. In this vein, this study refrains from Muller's criticism: 'It is also a mistake to read Bavinck's stress on common notions as a precognitive or primordial in an effort to sever its connection with the older tradition while at the same time linking his thought to nineteenth-century theories of self-consciousness.' Muller, "Kuyper and Bavinck on Natural Theology," 23.

qualified by "organically" but in turn modifies realism. This means, on the one hand, that the "critical" is reflective of the organicity of scientific theology, and on the other hand, that it is rooted in the reality of God's revelation. Meanwhile, as explicated above, Bavinck's realism can be characterised as critical in a general sense. Hence, organically *critical* realism should resemble the character of critical realism in general, which means 'that the real knowledge that we have of another is, from our side, always fallible knowledge whose truth and trustworthiness are dependent upon that other that we are making knowledge claims about.'[140] As will be seen anon, according to Bavinck's project of scientific theology, this critical character of scientific theology has its roots in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. This critical gesture targets the ecclesial tradition rather than God's revelation.

On the basis of the viewpoint that revelation is an organic whole, Bavinck divides revelation into two dispensations: the dispensation of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit. Whereas the former refers to the already-completed objective revelation by inscripturation, the latter means the human subjective appropriation of revelation.[141] As that the first dispensation has been completed, the Holy Spirit now applies revelation to humans by regeneration and illumination.[142] Bavinck elsewhere calls the Spirit's twofold work as being to "apply the work of Christ" and to "explain the word of Christ."[143] He relates the tradition of the Church to the latter. That is, the Holy Spirit makes use of God's revelation as an organic whole to form the tradition of the Church. Bavinck contends:

> After Jesus completed his work, he sent forth the Holy Spirit who, while adding nothing new to the revelation, still guides the church into the truth (John 16:12–15) until it passes through all its diversity and arrives at the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 3:18, 19; 4:13). In this sense there is a good, true, and glorious tradition. It is the method by which the Holy Spirit causes the truth of Scripture to pass into the consciousness and life of the church.[144]

Accordingly, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit shapes the tradition of the Church, that is, the tradition of the interpretation of the word of God. 'Tradition in its proper sense is the interpretation and application of the eternal truth in the vernacular and life of the present

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[140] La Montagne, *Barth and Rationality*, 127.
[141] *RD*, 1:382-383. The view of two dispensations clearly manifests Bavinck's reception of Calvin's and the post-Reformation Reformed tradition; Calvin, *Institutes*, I.ix.3; Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Two: Holy Scripture, The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 202-204.
[142] *RD*, 1:383-384.
[143] *RD*, 1:491.
[144] *RD*, 1:493-494; *GD*, 1:464-465.

generation.'[145] As Michael Allen and Scott Swain argue, '[t]he products and processes of tradition may be regarded … as instruments of the Spirit's illuminating presence.'[146] In this light, the whole history of theology is *de facto* the history of the Holy Spirit.

Bavinck maintains that ecclesial confessions epitomise the tradition of the Church and the history of theology. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the truth of Holy Scripture is universally accepted and recognised by the Church, which leads to the formation of the Church's confessions.[147] At the centre of gravity, organically *critical* realism, in essence, refers to the critical reception of the legacies of the Church, which is the interpretative result of God's organic revelation in history. To put it differently, 'our appropriation of ecclesial tradition must always be a critical traditioning wherein we seek to be shaped by the truth, goodness, and beauty of our heritage and not to be drawn into a pathology of untruth, evil, and ugliness by our native resources.'[148] This critical attitude toward the ecclesial tradition raises the question: How can scientific theology be critical of the tradition of the Church which is shaped by the Holy Spirit? It is arguable that Bavinck's answer to this question is grounded in the principle that the tradition and confessions of the Church are fallible by virtue of Holy Scripture as the sole *principium cognoscendi externum*.

Although the tradition of the Church, particularly embodying in its confessions, is shaped by the work of the Holy Spirit, Bavinck does not define the confession of the Church as the *principium* of scientific theology. In his critique of François Daubanton (1853-1920), Bavinck resolutely rejected Daubanton's identification of the Church's confession as the source of dogmatics and Holy Scripture as the norm.[149] On the contrary, Bavinck maintains that Holy Scripture, rather than the Church's confession, is the *principium* of theology and that as such, dogmatics should be grounded in Scripture.[150] This point is clarified in *Reformed Dogmatics*: 'Objective revelation in Christ, recorded in Scripture, is its external source of knowledge

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[145] *RD* 1:493; *GD*, 1:464.
[146] Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 45. Vanhoozer also holds the same viewpoint, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 138-139.
[147] *RD*, 1:30; *PCDS*, 97.
[148] Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, "Introduction," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, ed. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 5.
[149] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 264. François Daubanton was the professor of biblical theology, practical theology, and the history of mission at the University of Utrecht; on further, see Jan A. B. Jongeneel, "The Legacy of François Elbertus Daubanton," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 2 (2005): 93-97.
[150] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 265-266.

(*principium cognoscendi externum*).'[151] Moreover, Bavinck asserts that 'dogmatics is coordinate with confession and stands with it on one line.'[152] Note that several pages earlier Bavinck has already argued that '[e]very dogmatics is not the word of God itself, but a human, *fallible sketch* of the word of God. It is not the original, but always more or less, *never a completely similar image* of the divine truth.'[153] The corollary can be drawn that since the Church's confession is not the *principium cognoscendi externum* that *is* the objective revelation of God, it is fallible. It is susceptible to correction and revision under the infallible authority of Holy Scripture because it is actually the fruit of human intellectual work.[154] Given Bavinck's saying that '[d]ogmatics is nothing other than the scientific description of the confession of the church,' it is clear that scientific theology is critical of the Church's confession and tradition according to the criteria of Holy Scripture, which has inscripturated God's objective revelation as an organic whole.[155] This organically *critical* realism, on the one hand, guarantees the continuity of theology, and on the other hand, boosts the development of theology towards its end under the authority of Holy Scripture in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

> Thus, theology is essentially conservative. It accepts the legacies of former generations, not to throw them away but to augment them as soon as possible and pass them to the ensuing generations much more Reformed. It receives the acquired treasures not to throw them over and over again into the melting pot of criticism, but to present them to us if we can find in our soul their truth and beauty as strong as in the previous centuries. It is an illusion that one always wants to find something new in its field. … But at the same time, it is a progressive science. Respecting the past, it builds on the laid foundation until it is completed and reaches the final goal. … Theology is penetrated by the conviction that God is willing to ignite in this and following ages more lights about what was hitherto still hidden in Holy Scripture and wrapped in mystery. As long as theology has not fulfilled its task, it does not reach its final end. Meanwhile, the history of this dispensation does not yet have an end, which is consecrated to the interpretation of the Word.[156]

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[151] *RD*, 1:506; *GD*, 1:471.
[152] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 271.
[153] *Ibid*., 268; emphasis added.
[154] *RD*, 1:86; Bavinck, *Doctorenambt*, 72.
[155] *PCDS*, 94.
[156] *WHG*, 47; Dutch original: 'De Theologie is dus wezenlijk conservatief. Zij aanvaardt de erfenis der vorige geslachten, niet om ze te verkwisten maar om ze straks zoo mogelijk vermeerderd en nog meer gereformeerd aan de volgende geslachten over te geven. Zij neemt die verworvene schatten over, niet om ze telkens opnieuw te werpen in den smeltkroes der kritiek, maar om ze ons aan te bieden, of wij ook alzoo krachtig als in vorige eeuwen de waarheid en schoonheid er van betuigd mochten vinden in onze ziel. Het is eene illusie, op haar gebied altoos iets nieuws te willen vinden. … Maar tegelijk is zij eene progressieve wetenschap; het verleden eerbiedigend, bouwt zij voort op het gelegde fundament, totdat zij zelve voltooid is en het einddoel heeft bereikt. … De overtuiging doordringt haar, dat het Gode believen zal, om ook in deze en volgende tijden meer licht te ontsteken over wat tot dusverre in de H. Schrift nog verborgen en in nevelen gehuld was. Zoolang heeft zij haar taak niet volbracht noch haar einddoel bereikt. Maar ook zoolang heeft de geschiedenis dezer bedeeling nog geen einde, welke gewijd is aan de uitlegging des Woords.'

This critical reception of the past traditions of the Church is exercised in the Holy Spirit and aims for the fuller comprehension of the Word of God. Nonetheless, this still raises the question of the certainty of the knowledge acquired *via* the tradition and confessions of the Church. In this regard, one needs to bear in mind the fundamental principle of epistemic certainty, namely the *testimonium internum* of the Holy Spirit: 'All cognition of truth is essentially a witness that the human spirit bears to it and at bottom a witness of the Spirit of God to the Word, by whom all things are made.'[157] While applying this principle to the epistemic certainty of theology, as demonstrated above, Bavinck stresses the twofold work of the Holy Spirit: regeneration and illumination. Donald Macleod rightly notes that for Bavinck '[t]he Spirit regenerates by witnessing: witnessing both to scripture and to Christ. This means that the *testimonium* is not merely given *to* faith: it is given *in* faith.'[158] Given that Bavinck's notion of faith is both religious and epistemological, Bavinck contends with the Reformers that 'faith is not hope and opinion, not guess and conjecture, not even knowledge and assent, but certain knowledge and firm trust, a consciousness and conviction so strong and final[ly] it excludes all doubt and fear.'[159] From this argument, it can be deduced that faith, as the fruit of the Spirit's work, inherently carries the epistemic certainty of the tradition and confessions of the Church.

Furthermore, we observe a correspondence between the consciousness of the Church and that of individual dogmaticians, which further enhances the certainty of the knowledge of the ecclesial tradition and confessions.

> Both of these—Scripture and confession—are objective and exist independently of the dogmatician. In order that they receive subjective force for him as well, and can be reproduced, he must also sense within himself the testimony of the Holy Spirit—that testimony, however, as discerned not only in his heart but as discerned in the whole church that is now living, of which he is but one individual member.[160]

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[157] *RD*, 1:587; *GD*, 1:557. On this, Veenhof argues that Bavinck grounds the doctrine of *testimonium* on general epistemology; Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 490-491. However, this study proves that Bavinck's intention is to afford a parallel between theology as a particular science and science in general.

[158] Donald Macleod, "Bavinck's Prolegomena: Fresh Light on Amsterdam, Old Princeton, and Cornelius Van Til," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 2 (2006): 282; also see G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, trans. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 51-53.

[159] Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, 40. Further on Bavinck's view of the certainty of faith, see Donald Macleod, "Herman Bavinck and the Basis of Christian Certainty," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 92-107; Henk Van den Belt, "Herman Bavinck's Lectures on the Certainty of Faith (1891)," *TBR* 8 (2017): 35-63; Henk Van den Belt, "Geloofszekerheid tussen Objectief en Subjectief," in *Geloofszekerheid*, ed. Henk van den Belt (Soesterberg: Uitgeverij Aspekt, 2016), particularly 289-294.

[160] *PCDS*, 97.

Notwithstanding that organically *critical* realism requires a critical study of the tradition and confessions of the Church, Bavinck does not repudiate or devalue them insofar as this critical action is guarded by the Holy Spirit and always indebted to the Church.[161]

> And the church is led by the Holy Spirit in such a way that it gradually absorbs this content into its consciousness and reproduces it in its own language. The interpretation, formulation, and systematization of divine revelation therefore advances slowly and not without much aberration to the right and to the left. But it does go forward. The Holy Spirit's leading is the guarantee that it will; he does not rest until he has caused the fullness of Christ—which includes the fullness of his truth and wisdom—to dwell in the church and has filled that church with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). Therefore, just as there is unity and continuity in the development of every science, so is this true in theology and dogmatics.[162]

Accordingly, as Robert Jenson puts well, the dogmatician's 'confidence in the community's communal consciousness is in fact a confidence in the guiding presence of the Spirit.'[163] In short, the critical reception of the tradition of the Church, for Bavinck, is the Holy Spirit's sublimation of the ecclesial interpretation of God's revelation in history.

C. Summary

Organically critical realism is grounded in the reality of God's self-revelation. *Organically* critical realism is indicative of the correspondence between subjective revelation and objective revelation, which echoes positive revelationalism by clarifying how the human consciousness immediately experiences God's revelation. Moreover, organically *critical* realism sheds light on the way by which the Holy Spirit as the living agent and force develops the organism of dogmatics. To paraphrase it with B. A. Gerrish's language, '[t]he dogmatic theologian moves on to appraise the beliefs and dogmas in which the church and its theologians have embodied Christian faith and, where necessary, ventures to make a case for alternative language.'[164] For Bavinck, the courage to venture is nurtured by the Holy Spirit. Then, this critical activity unveils the fact that no single tradition within the Church dominates universally.

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[161] Bavinck's emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit could derive a charitably critical method of theological study; cf. Uche Anizor, *How to Read Theology: Engaging Doctrine Critically and Charitably* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

[162] *RD*, 1:120; *GD*, 1:92. Elsewhere, Bavinck writes: 'The testimony of the Holy Spirit is not a private opinion but the witness of the church of all ages, of Christianity as a whole, of reborn humankind in its entirety. At one time the church in all of its members, like the world, was hostile to the word of God. But the Holy Spirit, working in it and with it, took up the defense of the truth of Christ. He has broken its enmity, illumined its intellect, bent its will, and keeps it in touch with the truth from century to century and from day to day. The whole testimony of the believing community is a testimony of the Holy Spirit.' *RD*, 1:599; *GD*, 1:569.

[163] Robert W. Jenson, *Canon and Creed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 15.

[164] B. A. Gerrish, *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 18.

This implies that organically critical realism must be concomitant with the catholicity of Christianity, which will be explored in the ensuing chapter.

V. Concluding Remarks on the First Three Rationales

Before moving on to spelling out the rationales of dialectical catholicity and doxological teleology, I would like to offer remarks on the first three rationales by exploring the underlying cause of their sequence.

As noted in the beginning, the five rationales are set in concatenation and are thus shaped as a holistic grammar for Bavinck's scientific theology. However, the sequence of the argumentation above is not unintentional. The deliberate sequence rests upon the first aspect of the definition of scientific theology: 'Theology as a particular science assumes that God has revealed Himself in an apparent way.'[165] Hence, like revelation is the point of departure for theology, the revelational character of scientific theology must be the starting point of its grammar.

The organicism is arranged at the second place of the sequence is, on the one hand, due to Bavinck's contention that the organic is essentially characteristic of divine revelation. On the other hand, it is grounded on the first and the third factors of the definition of scientific theology: (1) God as the real object, and (3) divine object-defining.[166] The reality of God as knowable is grounded in the reality of the organic divine revelation, the appropriation of which requires human experience and consciousness. Therefore, organically critical realism should come after theological organicism.

How are the first three rationales related to the last two? Is divine revelation also the ground of the last two rationales? In what sense do the five rationales constitute the holistic grammar of scientific theology? By answering the three questions in the next chapter, the meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system through the lens of *wetenschappelijke* theology will come to the fore.

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[165] *GD*, 1:13; *RD*, 1:37-38; rev.; see chapter 3, IV.B.
[166] See chapter 3, IV.B.a, c.

Chapter 5 The Grammar of Scientific Theology (II)

> It is rather that the Reformed tradition made the honor of God the fundamental principle of all doctrine and conduct, of dogmatics and morality, of the family, society, and the state, of science and art. Nowhere was this principle of the glory of God more universally applied than among the confessors of the Reformed religion.[1]
>
> Herman Bavinck

I. Introduction

This chapter is intended to account for the last two aspects of the grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology: dialectical catholicity and doxological teleology. At this point, I suspect that the question might arise: Why group the last two rationales together at this point? The quotation used to introduce this chapter has clearly set forth the intimate relationship between catholicity and God's glory, which is characteristic of the *Gereformeerde* tradition. It is in this tradition that Bavinck stands.

How are the last two rationales related to the other three? Once again, the issue centres on divine revelation. Bavinck argues, 'The realization of the counsel of God begins with creation.'[2] Accordingly, he maintains that '[c]reation was the first revelation, the principle and foundation of all revelation.'[3] Following this, it could be argued that inasmuch as God's revelation is *universal*, scientific theology that is grounded in revelation must be *catholic*. Likewise, as God's revelation *aims for the glorification of God*,[4] scientific theology should have *doxology as its telos*.

In what follows, I will successively examine the rationales of dialectical catholicity and doxological teleology. The sequence is determined by the following: while positive revelationalism as the starting point of Bavinck's theological grammar means that scientific theology is *from God* and *by God*, the doxological *telos* as the end point indicates that scientific theology is *for God* and *to God*. In this way, the grammar's *exitus-reditus* scheme comes to the fore. The scheme's closed circle compacts the five rationales and is modelled as the meta-paradigm of Bavinck's scientific theology. Moreover, it will be demonstrated that Bavinck's scientific theology is fundamentally Trinitarian.

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[1] *RD*, 2:434; *GD*, 2:398.
[2] *RD*, 2:407; *GD*, 2:250.
[3] *PR*, 265; also see *RD*, 1:307.
[4] *RD*, 1:346.

II. Dialectical Catholicity

Bavinck's comprehensive discussion on the catholicity of Christianity is presented in his rectorial address delivered at the Theological School in Kampen in 1888.[5] Therein Bavinck lays down threefold definition of the catholicity of the Church according to the Patristic fathers.

> In the first place, they use it to refer to the church as a unified whole in contrast to the dispersed local congregations that make up the whole and are included in it. … Secondly, the term expresses the unity of the church as inclusive of all believers from every nation, in all times and places. … And finally, the church is sometimes referred to as catholic because it embraces the whole of human experience. It possesses perfectly all doctrines concerning either invisible and visible things that human beings need to know; it provides a cure for all kinds of sin, either of body or soul; it produces all virtues and good works, and partakes of all spiritual gifts.[6]

The first two points respectively denote temporal and historical catholicity. Temporally, all churches around the world are united, and historically all true believers constitute a unity throughout history. These two aspects correspond to the Reformers' theology of the visible and invisible Church, according to which visible churches have communion with each other. The third point does not pertain to the interior of the Church. Rather, it unveils the responsibility of a visible church to engage with the other spheres of human life.

Cory Brock has also summed up Bavinck's view of catholicity in three points. First, catholicity carries the connotation of universal communion, that is, 'to commune, to fellowship with the generations of the saints of the past and present.' Second, it refers to ecumenical polemics, which aims to achieve 'the purity of the church catholic.' Third, catholicity is indicative of the hunt for truth. That is, '[t]he search for the truth transcends the retreat to structures of institutional authority, but stands on the authority of God's self-manifestation and theological reason.'[7] In spite of being somewhat similar to Brock's summary of this notion, this study differs from Brock's by stressing the dialectical feature that is implicitly inherent in Bavinck's view of catholicity, which is going to be demonstrated below.

A closer look at Bavinck's three points will entail the estimation that his notion of catholicity is dialectical. The first two points presuppose the existence of individual entities (churches) which are part of the holistic one (the Church). The third point does the same. The catholicity of the Church that 'embraces the whole of human experience' should be actually

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[5] Herman Bavinck, *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk. Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1888); Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27, no. 2 (1992): 220-251.
[6] Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 221.
[7] Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 54-58.

practised in every local church. Note that Bavinck resolutely refuses to limit this ecclesial catholicity within the confines of a particular church in a specific place or time.[8] On the one hand, the broader notion of ecclesial catholicity reflects issues faced in Bavinck's own particular context. Two years before the publication of Bavinck's *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk*, the *Doleantie* Church, which was the peak of the campaign to defend Reformed confessional orthodoxy and combat bureaucratic polity in the Netherlands, was split from the established Dutch Reformed Church under the leadership of Kuyper on 6 January 1886. In 1887, the possible union between the *Doleantie* Church and Bavinck's denomination the Christian Reformed Church was proposed. However, efforts to unite these denominations were hindered by theological divergences, including, for example, the clash between Kuyper's supralapsarianism and the infralapsarianism of the Christian Reformed Church.[9] In this setting, Bavinck's insistence on broader ecclesial catholicity intended to reconcile the two parties. On the other hand, theologically, it is indisputable that his accent on catholicity goes to the heart of Bavinck's organic account of the visible church. Bavinck maintains that 'the ingathering of the elect must not be conceived individualistically and atomistically. … The church [*gemeente*] is an *organism*, not an aggregate; *the whole, in its case, precedes the parts*.'[10] In this light, it could be argued that Bavinck seems to envisage an ecumenical union of churches. This can be proved by his attendance at the ecumenical council hosted by the Alliance of the Reformed Churches in Toronto in 1892.[11]

Bavinck's insistence on the essential affinity between the church and theology ensures the application of the notion of ecclesial catholicity to theology, which in turn entails two ramifications. One is the organicity of theology, which has been laid out in the preceding chapter. The other is dialectical catholicity. To put it more specifically, the catholicity of Bavinck's view of scientific theology is dialectical in (1) that theology should be undertaken within a particular visible church and thus in a way that is relevant to a specific ecclesiastical tradition; (2) that scientific theology is always moving outwards from its own ecclesiastical

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[8] Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 242-243.
[9] On further, see James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 167-171.
[10] *RD*, 3:524; *GD*, 3:521; emphasis added. Bavinck here apparently refers to the visible church on the ground that he never makes the invisible church as the referent of the Dutch *gemeente* in *Reformed Dogmatics*. While speaking of the invisible church, Bavinck employs the Dutch *kerk*. On Bavinck's view of the visible church as organism, see *RD*, 4:329-333; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 191-195.
[11] Bavinck's conference paper pointed the audience to the contribution that Calvinism can make to the universal and catholic Christian faith. Herman Bavinck, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 25 (2014): 75-81; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 184-186.

starting point, and should engage not only with other theological traditions but also with the other sciences.

A. Standing in the Tradition

The catholicity of theology first denotes that scientific theology must stand within a particular theological tradition. According to Bavinck, this commitment to a tradition must embody in a dogmatician's work clearly.

> All dogmaticians, when they go to work, whether they recognise or not, stand in the historical manifestation of Christianity, in which they were born and nurtured and come to Scripture as Reformed, or Lutheran, or Roman Catholic Christians. In this respect as well, we cannot simply divest ourselves of our environment; we are always children of our time, the products of our environment. The result, therefore, is what one would expect: all the dogmatic handbooks that have been published by the biblical direction in light of their givens faithfully reflect the personal and ecclesiastical viewpoint of their authors. They cannot, therefore, claim to be more objective than those of explicitly ecclesiastical dogmaticians.[12]

As has been indicated in chapter 3, Bavinck stresses the confessions of the Church as the starting point of the interpretation of the word of God.[13] By arguing so, he opposes the idea of neutrality in theological studies as commended by some of his contemporary biblical scholars.[14] The object of Bavinck's criticism was probably his *de facto* supervisor Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891), who was a well-known biblical scholar around the world and highly commended a neutral approach to biblical studies. According to Herman Paul, Kuenen's neutral methodology consists in his historical-critical ethos. It is *historical* insofar as Kuenen attempts to undertake a purely historical scientific study, like inquiring merely into the authorship and provenance of different books of the Bible. It is *critical* insofar as he resolutely distances himself from faith authorities, like the confessions of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*.[15] It could be argued that it is Kuenen's critical gesture that is critiqued by Bavinck. As

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[12] *GD*, 1:58-59; *RD*, 1:82; rev. Bavinck also argues that 'the dogmatician receives the content of his faith from the hands of the church;' *RD*, 1:93.

[13] Chapter 3, III.

[14] Bavinck's contemporary German theologian Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), who is the scholar of New Testament theology and systematic theology, repudiates the objective neutrality in biblical hermeneutics. He argues that one must have 'certain convictions' that exert influence upon his perception, observation and judgment. Adolf Schlatter, "The Theology of the New Testament and Dogmatics," ed. and trans. Robert Morgan in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* (London: SCM, 1973), 122. In *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck consults Schlatter's work to demonstrate that knowledge is grounded in faith; *RD*, 1:566.

[15] Herman Paul, "Waarheidszin en Waarheidsliefde. Een Vrijzinnige Synthese van Geloof en Wetenschap," in *Theologie, Waarheidsliefde en Religiekritiek: Over Geloof en Wetenschap aan de Nederlandse Universiteiten sedert 1815*, ed. L. J. Dorsman and P. J. Knegtmans (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 27-28.

such, in contrast to Kuenen's saying, "I am nothing if not critical", Bavinck would say, "I am nothing if not confessional."[16]

Moreover, ecclesial traditions and confessions are guided by the Holy Spirit to serve the Church's interpretation and proclamation of the word of God, as indicated by organically *critical* realism. Therefore, Bavinck maintains that every dogmatician comes to interpret Holy Scripture with specific confessional commitments.[17] He opposes biblicism—by Scripture alone—and meanwhile confirms the importance of the traditions of the Church for articulating scientific theology, though Holy Scripture is still the *principium cognoscendi externum*.[18] To put it differently, notwithstanding Holy Scripture as the *norma normans non normata*, tradition is the *norma normans* as it is vivified by the Holy Spirit. In short, standing in the tradition and ecclesial confessions is of methodological significance to dogmatics.

Although Bavinck's subordination of biblical theology to dogmatics is challenged by many contemporary scholars,[19] his argument for standing within ecclesial traditions and confessions to articulate dogmatics and interpret the word of God will find many resonances in theological works nowadays. According to Kevin Vanhoozer, '[as] the result of sustained listening to Scripture and sustained thinking about its meaning, truth, and significance,' the ecclesial tradition has the testimonial authority to guide the individual believer's understanding of Scripture.[20] Likewise, Michael Allen and Scott Swain propose a 'ruled reading' of Holy Scripture, which operates with Reformed theological and ecclesiological principles. They contend that the interpretation of Holy Scripture from the perspective of Reformed confessions coincides with the Trinitarian faith and recognises both *sola Scriptura* and *tota Scriptura* in the course of biblical interpretation.[21]

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[16] Kuenen's saying is cited in Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 1:17. There, Tiele also says, "I am nothing if not historical." This is typical of Tiele's deployment of the idea of development in religious studies, as has unfolded in chapter two.
[17] Bolt, "Bavinck's Use of Wisdom Literature in Systematic Theology," 12-3.
[18] Cf. John Bolt, "*Sola Scriptura* as an Evangelical Theological Method?," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ron N. Gleason (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 154-165.
[19] See chapter 3, III.
[20] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 139-143.
[21] Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 95-116. The ruled reading of Holy Scripture has been unpacked in detail in Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), chapter 2; also see Michael Horton, "The *Sola*'s of the Reformation," in *Here We Stand!: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals for a Modern Reformation*, ed. James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin Sasse (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1996), 107.

Like Allen and Swain, Bavinck means that his account of scientific theology stands in the *Reformed* tradition, which belongs to the sixteenth-century Reformation, particularly Swiss Reformed theology. In his foreword to the first edition of *Reformed Dogmatics*, he announces:

> This work of dogmatic theology is especially tied to the type of Christian religion and theology that arose in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, notably in Switzerland. Not because this tradition claims to be an exclusively true expression of the truth but because the author is convinced that it is relatively the purest statement of the truth. In no other confession does the Christian faith in its religious, ethical, and theological character come as clearly into its own; nowhere else is it acknowledged as deeply and broadly, so widely and freely, is it so truly catholic, as in the churches of the Reformed tradition.[22]

To Bavinck's mind, it is clear that a scientific theology that is rooted in the Reformed tradition can be truly catholic to the maximum extent. This coincides with Bavinck's conviction in his rectorial address in 1888 that the Reformed tradition—more precisely Calvinism—leads to the truest interpretation of catholicity. Barend Kamphuis is critical of this stand, arguing that 'only Calvinism does justice to the catholicity of the church is itself not a very catholic judgment.'[23] The logic underlying Kamphuis's critique concerns the question: If catholicity presupposes various ecclesial traditions, how could Bavinck claim the truest expression of catholicity for Calvinism? Berkouwer's estimation is partly correct that Bavinck has not resolved the problem of the 'multiformity' of ecclesial traditions and achieved the unity, but emphatically objects to theological 'non-commitment.'[24] Nonetheless, I would suggest that Bavinck's retaining the "multiformity" is deliberate. On the one hand, he asserts that "Roman Catholic" is an oxymoron because it connects Christian catholicity to *one* specific place, to *one* specific person, and to *one* specific church.[25] As such, by arguing for the multiformity of ecclesial traditions, Bavinck intends to disclose the mistaken notion of catholicity advocated by the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, this idea of multiformity adds weight to his organically *critical* realism that is characteristic of his notion of scientific theology, as has been unpacked in the previous chapter.

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[22] Herman Bavinck, "Foreword to the First Edition (volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," trans. Bolt, John, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 9-10.
[23] Barend Kamphuis, "Herman Bavinck on Catholicity," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 24 (2013): 102.
[24] Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden*, 55. In this sense, Bavinck argues for the affinity of a church's confessionality and identity, as explicated in Conrad Wethmar, "Confessionality and Identity of the Church," in *Christian Identity*, ed. Eduardus Van der Borght (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 135-149. Meanwhile, it should be noted that Kamphuis's critique of Bavinck's position neglects Bavinck's saying that Calvinism is not the only truth, which will be explicated in the next section.
[25] *RD*, 4:322-323.

Granted, Bavinck's emphasis in standing in the Reformed tradition, or more specifically Calvinism, is on commitment. However, his view of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, as demonstrated above, has clearly described ecclesial traditions as vivified by Holy Spirit in history. What is more, the following examination of the second aspect of catholicity—the move outwards from a particular ecclesiastical starting point—will demonstrate Bavinck's belief that moving outwards from one's own tradition is the divinely appointed approach to the multiform traditions of the Church.

B. Moving Outwards

Presupposed in the notion of the catholicity of theology is the idea of standing in one's ecclesial tradition or theological commitment. In some sense, this tradition or commitment stands in the background. By contrast, moving outwards from it is prominent in the catholicity of theology. For Bavinck, this outwards direction is determined by the essence of dogma and confessions. 'The dogma that the church confesses and the dogmatician develops is not identical with the absolute truth of God itself.'[26] In this light, dogmatic statements and ecclesial confessions do not constrain believers' freedom and independence. They have true free conscience which can only be bound by the Almighty God.[27]

> And to stay in one's own church despite much impurity in doctrine and life is our duty as long as it does not prevent us from being faithful to our own confession and does not force us, even indirectly, to obey humans more than God. For a church that pressured its members to do that would, at that very moment and to the extent it did that, reveal itself to the conscience of its members as a false church, which accorded itself and its ordinances more power and authority than the Word of God.[28]

This outward action gives rise to a question about the method of engagement with one's own ecclesial confession and tradition. The aforementioned organically *critical* realism points to the belief that to be critical of a tradition is to have faith in the Holy Spirit's guidance. Nonetheless, the methodology involved in this requires further attention. Of course, Holy Scripture is the *norma normans non normata*. On this basis, Bavinck stresses the importance of the contextual reading of ecclesial confessions. In his early journal article 'De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk' (The Scientific Calling of Our Church) (1882), Bavinck argues that Reformed confessions can explain the essence of Reformed faith. However, he cautions against defining Reformed faith by a reductionist reading of these confessions on

[26] *RD*, 1:32; *GD*, 1:7.
[27] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 270-271.
[28] *RD*, 4:319; *GD*, 4:303-304.

their own. In like manner, the Three Forms of Unity—that is, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism—cannot lay bare the essence of Reformed faith completely.[29] Rather, Bavinck maintains that,

> we must put these in the framework of their time, explain, clarify and comment on them through historical circumstances, where they exist. Then, we have to consider and compare them in relation with the confessions of other Reformed churches, to trace and elucidate their peculiarity, and to penetrate into the spirit that animates them.[30]

What matters for Bavinck is not the literal meaning of Reformed confessions but rather their ethos and spirit. In advancing this argument, it could be said that Bavinck seems to deviate from his theological tradition. To the contrary, however, Bavinck's sentiment above is indicative of a contextual reading of Reformed confessions. As Richard Muller points out, 'it is the historical and cultural location of a particular statement or doctrine or theory that makes it intelligible to a particular culture at a particular time in history.'[31] Hence, the contexts of the formation of Reformed confessions are of great importance for a proper understanding of their quintessence. What is more, inasmuch as these confessions were symbols and served to unite churches, they often fall short of characteristics, theological scientific definiteness and sharpness.[32] In this light, the outward action is necessary to attain a scientific study of Reformed theology, which objects to a mechanical way of applying Reformed confessions.

This contextual reading is not only requisite for theological studies within Reformed traditions but is also indispensable to the outwards-facing direction of a catholic theology. Bavinck contends:

> the task of the dogmatician is not to draw the material for his dogmatics exclusively from the written confession of his own church but to view it in the total context of

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[29] Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 103. It should be noted that in his early career Bavinck preferred the term "Reformed" (*Gereformeerde*). When it comes to the 1890s, Bavinck chose to employ the word "Calvinism" (*Calvinisme*). He made a clear differentiation between the meaning of the two words: 'Reformed expresses merely a religious and ecclesiastical distinction; it is a purely theological conception. The term Calvinism is of wider application and denotes a specifie type in the political, social and civil spheres. It stands for that characteristic view of life and the world as a whole, which was born from the powerful mind of the French Reformer.' Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," 3.

[30] Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 103. Dutch original: 'Dan moeten wij deze zelve plaatsen in het raam van haar tijd, haar verklaren, toelichten, commentariëeren door de historische omstandigheden, waarin zij ontstaan is. Dan hebben wij haar in verband te beschouwen en te vergelijken met de belijdenisschriften van andere Gereformeerde Kerken, haar eigenaardigheid op te sporen en te verklaren, en in te dringen in den geest, die haar bezielt.'

[31] Richard A. Muller, "The Role of Church History in the Study of Systematic Theology," in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 91.

[32] Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 103.

> the unique faith and life of his church, and then again *in the context of the history of the whole church of Christ*. He therefore stands on the shoulders of previous generations. He knows he is surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and lets his witness merge with the voice of these many waters. Every dogmatics ought to be in full accord with and a part of the doxology sung to God *by the church of all ages*.[33]

It is evident that the outward action of catholicity is not limited within the confines of Reformed traditions. Rather, it encompasses the whole realm of the Church of Christ. As Brock and Sutanto remark, for Bavinck, 'the catholic dogmatician is to commune, to live in fellowship with the generations of the saints of the past.'[34] Added to this is that the fellowship should be built between a dogmatician and his contemporaries as well since catholicity involves with churches throughout the centuries. This is reminiscent of John Macquarrie's perspective of the nature of theological language. Macquarrie argues that theological language is both confessional and critical. It is confessional because '[i]t brings to expression the confession of the community as it acknowledges its experience of God.'[35] Meanwhile, it is critical because, in order to articulate the communal faith as clearly as possible, theologians will seek to understand other confessions and explore the compatibility between them.[36]

When combined, this outwards-directed impulse and the view that theology now develops in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, can be used to argue that catholically scientific theology is marked deeply by humility. The practitioner of scientific theology should be obedient to the freedom of God, who wills to impart His knowledge through the Holy Spirit in various historical and ecclesial contexts. In this light, Bavinck and Todd Billings reach a consensus in that the latter argues that the Holy Spirit's 'varied yet bounded work' in different historical contexts has shaped various traditions of the interpretation of Holy Scripture, which are God's calling of all cultures to be transformed according to the Word of God.[37] By the same token, David Willis asserts that ecclesial catholicity means the confession that 'God will shape the future in ways which go far beyond what one can imagine in the present but which will be used

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[33] *RD*, 1:86; *GD*, 1:62; emphasis added.
[34] Brock and Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism," 315. Berkouwer points out that Bavinck warns against rigorous judgment on others. One key difference between Bavinck and Kuyper is that 'Bavinck always goes to the extreme limit of appreciation, whereas Kuyper extends the limit less far;' Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden*, 54.
[35] John Macquarrie, *Thinking about God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 9.
[36] *Ibid*., 10. Macquarrie also argues that this critical action will engage with other religious studies. This viewpoint coincides with Bavinck's view of catholicity in a universal sense, which will be elaborated on below. In addition, he argues for another three features of the nature of theological language: existential-ontological, particular-universal, symbolic-conceptual (10-14).
[37] J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 105-148. Given this ecumenicity, Puchinger describes Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* as 'the most ecumenical work of protestant dogmatics'; George Puchinger, *Ontmoetingen met Theologen* (Zutphen: Uitgeverij Terra, 1980), 113.

by God for this future with his people and his world.'[38] From this vantage point, we might better understand why Bavinck said 'Calvinism, after all, is not the only truth!' after his 1898 journey to North America.[39] Although Bavinck found something concerning Christianity in the United States that was very much non-Calvinist, he still believed that 'God has entrusted America with its own high and great calling.'[40] Moreover, Bavinck contends that this outwards-facing impulse is significant in safeguarding a dogmatician's scientific study of theology.

> The dogmaticians moves forward most safely when he does not exegete Scripture and work it through dogmaticly on his own, but *maintains fellowship with the Christian church of all centuries* and with his own Church in particular, and is led by this dogmatic-historical labour and thereby attains most benefits.[41]

Accordingly, Bavinck suggests the outward-facing action that aims at the Christian (and not merely Reformed) *ressourcement*.

This outward-facing action within catholically scientific theology is reminiscent of Thomas Torrance's critique of the Reformed 'legalistic employment of Confession of Faith as systems of doctrinal propositions inseparable from specific forms in their systematic formalisation.'[42] Torrance contends that there are two approaches to ecclesial tradition: Irenaeus's 'canon of truth' and Tertullian's 'the rule of faith.' The former is the truth itself, whereas the latter is 'a fixed formula of truth for belief' in a legalistic manner.[43] Torrance maintains that Irenaeus helps us know that the ecclesial tradition is 'the living embodiment of faith and truth in the corporate life and structure of the Church.' Thereby, space can be created for the cooperation between various denominations.[44] In this light, Bavinck's Christian

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[38] David Willis, "The Ecumenical Future of Reformed Theology," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. David Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 191.

[39] On this journey, see George Harinck, "Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth: Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA" (paper presented at the The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage, Hope College, Holland Michigan, 1997), 151-160. For a fuller account of this journey, see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 301-314.

[40] Herman Bavinck, "Herman Bavinck's 'My Journey to America'," trans. James Eglinton, *Dutch Crossing* 4, no. 2 (2017): 191-192; also see Harinck, "Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth: Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA," 151-160.

[41] Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 268-269; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'de dogmaticus zal het veiligst gaan, wanneer hij niet op eigen houtje de Schrift exegetiseert en dogmatisch verwerkt, maar wanneer hij de gemeenschap onderhoudt met de Christelijke kerk aller eeuwen en met zijne Kerk in het bijzonder, en door dien dogmen-historischen arbeid zich leiden laat en daarmede winste doet.'

[42] T. F. Torrance, "The Deposit of Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36, no. 1 (1983): 26-27.

[43] *Ibid*., 15.

[44] *Ibid*., 22, 27-28. In this regard, Torrance particularly criticises Charles Hodge (26). Hodge argues that 'our theory of the Church, depends on our theory of doctrine. If we hold a particular system of doctrine, we must hold a corresponding theory of the Church. The two are so intimately connected that they cannot be

ressourcement is resonant with Torrance's Irenaean approach to the tradition of the Church in the contemporary ecumenical movement.

It is worth noting that the catholicity of Bavinck's scientific theology does not set Christianity as its frontier line. Rather, catholically scientific theology should extend to all creation. This stand is clearly expressed in Bavinck's rectorial address on the catholicity of Christianity in 1888. Therein, Bavinck maintains that if the death of Christ has influenced the entire creation, his resurrection should be equally influential. Accordingly, he qualifies the Christian faith as not only 'a pearl of great price' but also 'a mustard seed' and 'yeast.'[45] This means that the catholicity of the Christian faith implies Christian participation into the world, like yeast that leavens all in the world. 'The Christian faith,' Bavinck contends, 'is not a quantitative reality that spreads itself in a transcendent fashion over the natural but a *religious and ethical power* that enters the natural in an immanent fashion and eliminates only that which is unholy. The kingdom of heaven may be a treasure and *a pearl of great price*, but it is also *a mustard seed* and *a leaven*.'[46] To paraphrase it in Eglinton's language, 'while the gospel (as the transcendent pearl of great price) provides an institutional haven for Christians in the world, it also (as the transforming leaven) provides the impetus and rationale for their involvement therein.'[47]

Now that the Christian faith is catholic in the sense that it works as a leavening agent in the world, scientific theology should commit to such a character of leaven or yeast, wielding religious and ethical influences in the world. Hence, as Bavinck asserts, '[t]he Gospel is a joyful tiding, not only for the individual person but also for humanity, for the family, for society, for the state, for art and science, for the entire cosmos, for the whole groaning creation.'[48] One would observe that Bavinck's sentiment more or less echoes Barth's view of theology as a joyful science (*fröhliche Wissenschaft*). For Barth, theology is joyful insofar as, like missionary

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separated.' Charles Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879), 38. Torrance estimates that Hodge's point of view fails to '[adore] respect for the Truth of God revealed in Jesus Christ which far transcends human conceptions and expressions of it, and in order to guard its objective reality and character from time-conditioned, distorting interpretations of it in the mission of the Church' (26). Colin Gunton holds a similar viewpoint about confessions, the Church and the ecumenical movement, see Colin Gunton, "Confessions, Dogmas and Doctrine: An Exploration of Some Interactions," in *Reformed Theology in Contemporary Perspective: Westminster: Yesterday, Today–and Tomorrow*, ed. Lynn Quigley (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006), 221-227; this ecumenical involvement with other confessions are intrinsic to the Reformed tradition; see Willis, "The Ecumenical Future of Reformed Theology," 187-190.

[45] Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 223-224.

[46] *Ibid.*, 236. Emphasis added.

[47] James Eglinton, "To Transcend and to Transform: The Neo-Calvinist Relationship of Church and Cultural Transformation," in *Calvinism and Culture*, ed. Gordon Graham, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 180.

[48] Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 224.

work, theology 'can only aim to serve … by rendering a certain limited and transitory assistance to the cause of the community and therefore of all Christians and the world as a whole.'[49] Like Barth, Bavinck shows that this catholicity demonstrates how scientific theology can be a joyful undertaking for the whole creation. Hence, John Bolt remarks correctly that 'Christian theology is not only—and certainly not in the first place—a summary of what Christians *believe*, but an attempt to state what is really true about God and the world.'[50] A catholically scientific theology seeks to bear testimony to God in every sphere of human life.

> "Reformed" is an entire world-and-life view. It puts humans in a particular relationship with God, and thus also in a peculiar relationship with all things, with family, state, society, art, science and so forth. In addition to [its principles regarding] dogmatics, therefore, there are also principles regarding the moral, political, social, scientific and artistic. There is nothing on which the Reformed principles do not press their peculiar stamp.[51]

The catholicity that goes beyond the borders of the Christian religion corresponds with Bavinck's theological organicism. As briefly mentioned earlier, the interior organic character of scientific theology must generate the exterior organic outreach. The coordination between the outward trajectory that marks catholicity, and theological organicism, reinforces that scientific theology must proactively engage with the other sciences. That is, scientific theology that is the Queen of the sciences should exercise her spiritual and moral dominion in the sphere of science, as will be seen in the next chapter.

C. Summary

The catholicity of Bavinck's scientific theology indicates that, whereas his location in the Reformed, or better Calvinist, tradition is standing in the background, his move outwards from this tradition is present in the foreground. These two factors constitute the dialectical essence of Bavinck's catholicity. In other words, dialectical catholicity consists in the simultaneity of standing and moving.

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[49] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Volume IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 3.2*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 881.
[50] Bolt, "*Sola Scriptura* as an Evangelical Theological Method?," 82.
[51] Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 104. Dutch original: 'Het Gereformeerde is eene gansche wereld- en levensbeschouwing. Het stelt den mensch in eene bijzondere verhouding tot God, en dus ook in eene eigenaardige verhouding tot alle dingen, tot huisgezin, staat, maatschappij, kunst, wetenschap enz. Behalve dogmatische, zijn er dus ook zedelijke, staatkundige, maatschappelijke, wetenschappelijke en kunstbeschouwende beginselen. Niets is er, waarop de Geref. beginselen niet hun eigenaardigen stempel drukken.' The same point of view is laid out in Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," 3, 5.

To be sure, Bavinck holds fast to his own Calvinist tradition. He clarifies that 'the Calvinistic rigorism was born from the desire to consecrate the whole life to God' on the ground of its 'sobriety and healthfulness of its entire view of life and of the world.'[52] In fact, Bavinck's dialectical catholicity could be understood as a centrifugal movement. His own Calvinist tradition is the centre, from which scientific theology is moving outwards and going beyond the borders of Christianity to reach the ends of the world. In so doing, scientific theology glorifies God within the dogmatician's own tradition, in the territories of Christianity, and more importantly, around the world. 'The doxological character of dogmatic statement,' Wolfhart Pannenberg argues, 'is related to their peculiar universality as statements about the eternal God and his acts.'[53] Then, what humans praise is not *that* theological tradition, but rather the God––the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—who has revealed Himself universally.

III. Doxological Teleology

Thus far, the analysis has emphasised that Bavinck seems primarily to articulate an intellectually scientific theology. To be sure, the first four aspects of the grammar have set out the rationality of Bavinck's scientific theology. However, Bavinck does not wish to restrain this scientificity within the sphere of intelligence. To his mind, the idiosyncrasy of this scientificity consists in the fact that theology's intellectual and doxological natures cannot ever be ruptured. I would like to employ the term "perichoresis" to qualify the affinity of the intellectual and the doxological natures. For Bavinck, "perichoresis" is inclined to focus on the incarnation and Christ's divine nature and commingles the divine and human natures.[54] Nonetheless, "perichoresis" is employed here in view of the intratrinitarian life rather than Bavinck's Christological concern. According to Torrance's account of the Patristic use of perichoresis in articulating the doctrine of the Trinity, perichoresis means the intratrinitarian life that the three differing divine Persons 'exist in one another and dwell in one another.'[55] In like manner, according to Bavinck, theology's intellectual and doxological natures do mutually exist and indwell. More specifically, "perichoresis" connotes that theological intelligence and doxology belong together without confusion or identification.

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[52] Bavinck, "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations," 80, 78.
[53] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?," in *Basic Questions in Theology, Volume One* (London: SCM, 1970), 202.
[54] *RD*, 3:256, 258-259.
[55] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 168-202.

A. Knowing God in Praising

The perichoretic relationship between the intellectual and doxological natures of scientific theology is fundamentally grounded in the purpose of revelation. Bavinck contends:

> In revelation God becomes knowable. And it is always also the purpose of revelation that human beings should know, serve, and honor God. Revelation indeed has God as its author and content and so also as its final end; God does all things ultimately for his own sake: of him, through him, and to him are all things (Rom. 11:36).[56]

In revelation, intelligence and doxology go hand in hand insofar as God who reveals Himself is knowable and praisable. Given that '[t]heology as a particular science assumes that God has revealed Himself,' Bavinck of course holds firmly to the belief that the *telos* of theology is the glorification of God.[57]

> The aim of theology, after all, can be no other than that the rational creature[s] know God and, knowing him, glorify God (Prov. 16:4; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 3:17). It is his good pleasure (εὐδοκια) to be known by human beings (Matt. 11:25, 26). The object of God's self-revelation, accordingly, is to introduce his knowledge into the human consciousness and through it again to set the stage for the glorification of God himself.[58]

Two significant observations are worth noting with respect to the statement above. First, since divine glorification is the object of God's revelation, revelation must enter into human consciousness in order to bring the fallen human person back to glorifying God. In this light, the doxological teleology and positive revelationalism of scientific theology are mutually enhanced. Second, to know God is not the final end of theology. Rather, the doxological teleology keeps scientificity intact and elevates the intellectual nature of theology to such a high degree that knowing God is *in* praising Him. With regard to this perichoresis of the intellectual and the doxological actions, a question arises: How does Bavinck combine knowing God with praising God? Does this perichoresis risk assimilating the intellectual aspect of theology into the doxological so that theology exclusively belongs to the Church? In order to answer these questions, we need first to examine Bavinck's conception of God's glory.

Bavinck presents a lengthy discourse on God's glory in the second volume of *Reformed Dogmatics*. He is preoccupied with the biblical notion of glory. After developing an

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[56] *RD*, 1:341-342; *GD*, 1:313.
[57] *RD*, 1:37-38; *GD*, 1:13.
[58] *RD*, 1:213; *GD*, 1:184.

etymological study of the Hebrew and Greek words for glory, he defines the term "glory" as follows.

> The 'glory of YHWH' or 'glory of God' indicates the splendour and magnificence that is inseparable from all of God's virtues and his self-revelation in nature and foremost in grace, the glorious form in which he everywhere appears to his creatures. This glory and majesty in which God is clothed and which characterizes all his work (1 Chron. 16:27; Ps. 29:4; 96:6; 104:1; 111:3; 113:4; etc.), reveals throughout his creation (Ps. 8; Isa. 6:3), but nevertheless is especially visible in the realm of grace.[59]

Three points stand out in reference to this definition. First, God's glory and self-revelation are perichoretic and essentially inseparable. God's glory is revealed and God's self-revelation is glorious. While scientific theology has God as its object and draws its content from His self-revelation, the revealed glory of the Revealer cannot be left out. In this light, when one asks if knowing God in praising assimilates theology into doxology, what is presupposed is the dichotomy between them. To Bavinck's mind, there is no such a dualistic viewpoint inherent to the scientificity of theology. Knowing God and praising God are two sides of the same coin, which is, the true scientific theology.

Second, given that God's glory is revealed throughout his creation, in nature and grace, both general and special revelation constitute the manifestation of God's glory. In this sense, doxology is not something limited within the Church. If such were the case, doxology would become a tool for dividing the organism of revelation—separating general revelation from special revelation—and pitting grace against nature. This would contradict the Bavinckian axiom that "grace restores and renews nature."[60] Moreover, while reckoning with the universality of revelation and doxology, Bavinck infers that science is not limited to private seminaries but belongs to universities.

> Science exists also for God's sake and finds its final goal in his glory. Specifically, this then is true of theology; in a special sense it is from God and by God, and hence for God as well. … theology and dogmatics do not belong … in a church seminary, but in the university of the sciences (*universitas scientiarum*).[61]

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[59] *GD*, 2:222; *RD*, 2:252; rev.

[60] On Bavinck's view of nature and grace, see Jon Stanley, "Restoration and Renewal: The Nature of Grace in the Theology of Herman Bavinck," in *Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 81-104.

[61] *RD*, 1:53-54; *GD*, 1:31; also see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 135. Bavinck also argues in his newspaper article that in contrast to a private seminary, a university is a preferable place where God's revelation in Christ can be brought into every sphere of human life. Herman Bavinck, "Dankbetuiging," *De Bazuin* 37, no. 16 (1889).

With this in mind, it is arguable that for Bavinck to speak of knowing God in praising is not to restrict scientific theology within the ecclesial confines. Conversely, doxologically scientific theology should be extended to the ends of the world. In this regard, the first four aspects of the grammar—positive revelationalism, theological organicism, organically critical realism and dialectical catholicity—converge into the doxological teleology of the scientificity of theology.

Given the revealedness and visibility of God's glory, Bavinck's definition of "glory" derives the third point that God's glory is communicable. 'Like all God's perfections, so also that of God's glory is reflected in his creatures. *It is communicable*. In the created world there is a *faint reflection* of the inexpressible glory and majesty that God possesses.'[62] It is explicit that the communication of God's glory is not ontological but rather analogical, which is reflective of Bavinck's positive use of the term *vestigia Dei*. 'All creatures are embodiments of divine thoughts, and all of them display the footsteps or the *vestigia Dei*.'[63] On this basis, Bavinck accounts for the communicability of God's glory in the aesthetic language.

> Speaking of creatures, we call them pretty, beautiful, or splendid; but for the beauty of God Scripture has a special word: glory. For that reason it is not advisable to speak … of God's beauty. Augustine already spoke in this vein, proceeding from the basic premise that "whatever is, insofar as it has being, is true, good, and beautiful." He reasons as follows: in the realm of being and therefore in the realm of the true, the good, and the beautiful, there are distinctions, rankings, and ascendance. To the degree that a thing has more being, to that extent it also has more truth, goodness, and beauty. Everything is beautiful in its kind. …All creatures, accordingly, contribute to the beauty of the whole. But all creaturely beauty is transitory and changeable; it is not beautiful by itself but by participation in a higher, absolute beauty. … The pinnacle of beauty, the beauty toward which all creatures point, is God. He is supreme being, supreme truth, supreme goodness, and also the apex of unchanging beauty.[64]

Bavinck here draws primarily on Augustine's Christianised Neo-Platonic ontology. Bavinck's use of Augustinian Platonism can be explained by his appreciation of Plato's philosophy of beauty. In the retrospect of the idea of beauty in history, Bavinck asserts that Plato laid the foundation of aesthetics for future generations.

> [Plato] especially tried to give a metaphysical foundation to beauty and to derive it from the world of ideas. … The ideas that belong there are more-or-less imprinted

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[62] *RD*, 2:254; *GD*, 2:224; emphasis added.
[63] *GD*, 2:523; *RD*, 2:561; rev. On Bavinck's use of *vestigia*, see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 82-84.
[64] *RD*, 2:254; *GD*, 2:224. Bavinck elsewhere argues: 'He is the Lord of glory and spreads his beauty lavishly before our eyes in all his works. His name is precious in the whole earth, and while he did not leave us without a witness, he also fills our hearts with happiness when we observe that glory.' Bavinck, "Of Beauty and Aesthetics," 259.

> on the material world by the demiurge and shine through the visible, and we therefore behold the beauty also in nature around us. … Beauty thus lies first of all in the content, in the idea, but harmony characterizes its appearance. Wherever in the world it in its various forms shows a finite expression of the infinite, beauty is absolute idea.[65]

In Bavinck's reading, Plato's idea of beauty was enriched by Aristotle and Plotinus and then introduced into Christianity, exerting a great influence on church fathers, including Augustine.[66]

Augustine's use of Plato's idea of beauty is grounded on his theological ontology. Augustine relates being with truth and describes God as *the* Being. Following this, he sets out the relationship between the Being and beings, arguing that to be is to participate in the Being. Moreover, Augustine maintains that there is the degree of beings, the zenith of which is God who is the supreme Being.[67] Bavinck applies Augustine's notions of "degree of beings" and ontological participation to his theological aesthetics. For Bavinck, there is the degree of beauty; the supreme beauty is called glory. The existence of beauty is due to its participation in the supreme beauty (the pinnacle of beauty) —the divine glory. Moreover, the degree of beauty is reflective of God's revelation in nature. As with Augustine, Bavinck elegantly says, 'Ask all creatures and "they will answer: 'look and see, we are beautiful!' Their beauty is their confession."'[68] By arguing so, as Robert Covolo remarks, Bavinck aims to '[reclaim] created beauty as a revelation of God designed to direct us toward a transcendent beauty—the beauty that God alone possess in his categorically distinct trinitarian glory.'[69] Bavinck's theological aesthetics ensures that the aesthetic understanding of God's glory heightens the sentiment that scientific theology is doxological in a universal sense.

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[65] Bavinck, "Of Beauty and Aesthetics," 246.
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), VII.x.16-VII.xi.17, VII.xvi.22. Augustine writes: 'They are because they come from you. But they are not because they are not what you are. That which truly is is that which unchangeably abides' (VII.xi.17). It is worth noting that by the notion of participation, Augustine does not mean creatures share the divine substance. Instead, Augustine always insists that creatures are finite but only God is infinite (VII.v.7).
[68] *RD*, 2:254. Bavinck cites this sentence from Augustine, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, trans. Mary Sarah Muldowney, ed. Hermigild Dressler, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 38 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 241.2.

Kuyper says something similar: 'Glory is, in fact, nothing other than a higher degree of beauty. It is beauty in its consummation, but still in a way whereby *present* beauty and *coming* glory are connected to one another, such that both are revelations of one and the same principle.' Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art*, trans. Nelson Kloosterman, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2011), 130.
[69] Robert S. Covolo, "Herman Bavinck's Theological Aesthetics: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis," *TBR* 2 (2011): 57.

The threefold aspect of Bavinck's definition of glory unveils the fact that for Bavinck the intellectual and the doxological natures of scientific theology exist in one another. In this light, to be scientific is to be both intellectual and doxological. More importantly, as the final *telos* of scientific theology, doxology can be seen as the navigator of the intellectual aspect of scientific theology. This move is reminiscent of John Webster's saying that the 'proper calling of [the Christian dogmatic] … is the praise of God by crafting concepts to turn the mind to the divine splendor. … [C]oncepts are only serviceable as the instruments of spiritual apprehension.'[70] In this sense, doxology is *the* hallmark of scientific theology.

B. Theocentricism and Relationality

While considering Bavinck's scientific theology through the lens of doxology, it is not difficult to observe that both theology's starting point and end point are God and His glory. As Bavinck argues,

> Science exists also for God's sake and finds its final goal in his *glory*. Specifically, this then is true of theology; in a special sense it is *from God* and *by God*, and hence *for God* as well. But precisely because its final purpose does not lie in any creature, not in practice, or in piety, or in the church, amidst all the [other] sciences it maintains its own character and nature. Truth as such has value. Knowledge as such is a good.[71]

The phrases "from God", "by God" and "for God" make plain the theocentric foundation of doxologically scientific theology. Theology is the scientific study of God in His self-revelation and then to ascribe the glory and honour to God. The principal purpose and task of scientific theology are doxological—that is, to make God known to us so that we will revere and worship Him.[72] Then, scientific theology reveals the glorious *telos* of the other sciences. '[F]or Bavinck,' Marinus de Jong says, 'science is part of worship; through it we discover more of the beauty of God and his creation.'[73]

Moreover, the identification of the starting point and the end point displays the divine initiative in scientific theology. This means that the glorious purpose and task of theology are ultimately determined by God: 'The object of God's self-revelation … is to introduce his

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[70] John Webster, "Life in and of Himself," in *God and the Works of God*, God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology, vol. 1 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 27. Kevin Vanhoozer also argues: 'The nature and quality of our worship is an index of our theological understanding and our spiritual life, a measure of our apprehension and appropriation of God's truth and God's Spirit.' Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Worship at the Well: From Dogmatics to Doxology (and Back Again)," *Trinity Journal* 23, no. 1 (2002): 13.
[71] *RD*, 1:53; *GD*, 1:31; emphasis added.
[72] *WHG*, 39, 44
[73] De Jong, "The Heart of the Academy," 70.

knowledge into the human consciousness and through it again to set the stage for the glorification of God himself.'[74] Kuyper argues in a similar way: 'From the finite no conclusion can be drawn to the infinite, neither can a Divine reality be known from external or internal phenomena, unless that real God *reveals* Himself in my consciousness to my ego; reveals Himself as *God*; and thereby moves and impels me to see in these finite phenomena a brightness of *His* glory.'[75] Kuyper and Bavinck concur that the divinely initiated revelation does not merely desire for the human reception of the knowledge of God. The ultimate goal is the glory of God. One can clearly observe the *exitus-reditus* scheme, which is constructed by the divine initiative and the divine glorification.

We need to pause to clarify that for Bavinck, the truth that God and His glory are the starting point and end point of scientific theology does not mean divine determinism. If everything concerning scientific theology has been determined by God, one could perhaps conclude that humans always passively, statically and mechanically receive the knowledge that has been revealed. For Bavinck, such is not the case. Doxology implies a bilateral action. This means that doxologically scientific theology is characterised as bilateral. On the one hand, the bilateral implication indicates that God is the Revealer and should be glorified and, concurrently, the human being is the recipient of revelation and should glorify God: 'Because it is God's *right* to be served and worshipped by human beings, it is, therefore, the human being's due *obligation*.'[76] This obligation claims for the involvement of the whole human person into doxologically scientific theology. Thereby, theology as a science proves that the Christian faith reconciles the whole human being with God, not only the human mind and reason but also the heart and conscience.[77] On the other hand, the bilateral implication denotes that scientific theology is relational. Theology's task is not merely to spell out the knowledge of God, but to impel one to actualise and concretise this knowledge in the relationship between God who is praised and human beings who praise. Bavinck thus argues 'the scientific system of the knowledge of God' is grounded in God's revelation 'concerning himself and all creatures as they stand in relation to him.'[78] According to Bavinck, this relational aspect of doxologically scientific theology is developed in the human scientific study of the *opera ad extra Trinitatis*.

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[74] *RD*, 1:213; *GD*, 1:184. Bavinck also asserts that 'dogmatics describes for us God, always God, from beginning to end—God in his being, God in his creation, God against sin, God in Christ, God breaking down all resistance through the Holy Spirit and guiding the whole of creation back to the objective he decreed for it: the glory of his name.' *RD*, 1:112.
[75] *EST*, 343; *EHG*, 2:297.
[76] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 92.
[77] *WHG*, 38.
[78] *RD*, 1:38; *GD*, 1:13.

He asserts that 'the essence of the Christian religion consists in the reality that the creation of the Father, ruined by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God and re-created by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God.'[79] With the scientific knowledge of the Triune God's work (God as Creator, Redeemer and Perfecter) whereby God's attributes are revealed to humans, humans stand in relation to God, and praise and glorify the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This argument seems to anticipate Jürgen Moltmann's view of theology and doxology: 'Real theology, which means the knowledge of God, finds expression in thanks, praise and adoration. And it is what finds expression in doxology that is the real theology.'[80] In this way, as Thomas Torrance contends, scientific theology 'is a form of intense intellectual communion with God in which our minds are taken captive by his Love and we come to know God more and more through himself.'[81]

More importantly, according to Bavinck, the relational aspect of doxologically scientific theology pertains to dogmaticians—the practitioners of scientific theology. As has been argued earlier, in regeneration, the Holy Spirit illuminates the human consciousness to receive God's revelation by faith (the believing consciousness): 'And because revelation is of such a nature that it can only be truly accepted and appropriated by a saving faith, it is absolutely imperative that the dogmatician be active as *believer not only in the beginning* but also *in the continuation* and *at the end* of his work.'[82] What is the meaning of the dogmatician's ever-believing status? We need to recall Bavinck's account of the Holy Spirit's twofold work: regeneration and illumination. The fruit of regeneration is the believing consciousness (faith), and illumination operates with the testimony of the Holy Spirit. This means that faith and testimony cannot be ruptured. Thus, for Bavinck, the dogmatician's lasting faith is significant because they need 'the [continuing] testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the dogmatician himself and of the church from which he draws life.'[83] Note that the immediate context of this argument is concerning Bavinck's view of the provisionality of dogmatic statements and the continuing expansion of dogmatics by the Spirit. Hence, it can be inferred that the relational aspect of doxologically scientific theology is reflective of the dogmatician's humility before God. As Michael Horton contends, 'doxology challenges our intellectual pride and curbs our thirst for

[79] *RD*, 1:112; *GD*, 1:89.
[80] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM, 1981), 152.
[81] Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001), xii.
[82] *RD*, 1:42; *GD*, 1:18; emphasis added.
[83] *PCDS*, 99.

speculation.'[84] Like Bavinck, Wolfhart Pannenberg presents an exquisite statement on this matter.

> The knowledge of Christian theology is always partial in comparison to the definitive revelation of God in the future of his kingdom. … Recognizing the finitude and inappropriateness of all human talk about God is an essential part of theological sobriety. … With this recognition our talk about God becomes doxology in which the speakers rise above the limits of their own finitude to the thought of the infinite God. In the process the conceptual contours do not have to lose their sharpness. Doxology can also have the form of systematic reflection.[85]

We can perceive here that knowing and praising God converge. To recognise the finitude of scientific theology is to praise the infinity of God; to concede the provisionality of dogmatics is to adore the freedom of God's work in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

This high view of doxology might raise a question about the Christian reception of non-Christian scholarship. Bavinck's aesthetic understanding of glory implies that the knowledge of God is somewhat perceived by humans universally. This means that non-Christian scholars may to some extent present truths about God that do not have the Triune God as their object.[86] Accordingly, an issue arises concerning the validity of the knowledge of God articulated through the lens of general revelation alone. To be sure, Bavinck's theological aesthetics corresponds with his theology of general revelation.[87] His doxologically scientific theology is grounded in God's special revelation, the Word of God in Holy Scripture, which enables humans to reach the final goal of theology—the glorification of God.[88] Given that general and special revelation shapes an organic whole without contradictions, the non-Christian presentation of truths about God and Christian knowledge of God as expressed by doxologically scientific theology could be harmonious. Although non-Christian truths about

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[84] Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrim on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 23.
[85] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 55; also see Pannenberg, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?," 202-203.
[86] Bavinck's theological aesthetics could be used as an indirect response to Bruce Pass's remark that 'Bavinck does not elaborate on the difference between a theology that has mystery for its lifeblood and the theology of the unregenerate.' Pass, "Revelation and Reason in Herman Bavinck," 257.
[87] Robert Covolo points out that one idiosyncratic character of Bavinck's theological aesthetics consists in 'his articulation of beauty as a distinct kind of general revelation;' Covolo, "Herman Bavinck's Theological Aesthetics," 52.
[88] *RD*, 1:346; 'God reveals himself for his own sake: to delight in the glorification of his own attributes. But on the journey toward this final end we do after all encounter the creature, particularly the human being, who serves as instrument to bring to manifestation the glory of God's name before the eyes of God. Precisely in order to reach this final goal, the glorification of God's name, special revelation must strive to the end of re-creating the whole person after God's image and likeness and thus to transform that person into a mirror of God's attributes and perfections.'

God fall short of doxology, Christian scholars can appreciate them according to the Holy Scriptures, the *principium cognoscendi externum*.

This appreciation is the action of the human response to God's grace. Bavinck avers that the non-Christian knowledge of God, which is embodied particularly in religion, is the result of God's common grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.[89] He also insists that revelation is common to all religions.[90] Jan Veenhof points out that '[Bavinck's] notions of common grace and general revelation basically function as *correlata*, just like special grace and special revelation.'[91] In this light, the Christian appreciation of the non-Christian knowledge of God, as derived from God's general revelation, is the Christian praise of God's common grace and the working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, despite his objection to the substitution of theology for religious science, Bavinck recognises the value of religion. He contends:

> religion and theology are not to be related to one another as mother and daughter, much less still as daughter and mother. Rather, they are two sisters who each have to fulfil a special task and calling in the household of God's Church. They are like Mary and Martha in the household of Lazarus. Mary had chosen the good portion, which would not be taken away from her, and Martha was cumbered with much serving. Nevertheless, Martha served the Lord, too, and Jesus loved them both. Mutual independence does not, however, ultimately nullify reciprocal relationship and cooperation.[92]

What does the phrase "the good portion" mean by Bavinck? What do the words "cumbered with much serving" refer to? Several pages later, Bavinck implicitly explains their meanings. 'To practise theology – it is a holy work. It is a *priestly service* in the house of the Lord. It is itself religion, a serving of God in His *temple*, a devotion of heart and mind to the *glory* of His Name.'[93] The rhetorical language used by Bavinck here indicates the doxological nature of theology. From this vantage point, "the good portion" means that theology is knowing God in praising; hence, theology is the true service, the *priestly service*. Although religion has certain knowledge of God, it is disorientated and does not have the doxological *telos* so that it is 'cumbered with much serving.' Thus, the Christian appreciation of the non-Christian

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[89] *RD*, 1:319, 587; 2:71. On Bavinck's pneumatological approach to religion, see Robert S. Covolo, "Advancing a Neo-Calvinist Pneumatology of Religions: The Role of Recent Yongian Contribution," in *Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 316-322.
[90] *RD*, 1:284-287; *PR*, 159-160; also see *RD*, 1:318.
[91] Jan Veenhof, "Revelation and Grace in Herman Bavinck," in *Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 7.
[92] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 126. It is worth noting that by religion (*religie*), Bavinck here refers narrowly to the practice of Christian piety and meanwhile broadly to 'the fear of God', which can refer to religion in general (131). As such, he occasionally calls Christianity the absolute religion (116-117).
[93] *Ibid*., 131; emphasis.

knowledge of God is not only praising the grace of God, but also showcases the glory of the Triune God who should have been all religions' objective.

In short, doxologically scientific theology is theocentric, that is, being initiated by God and moving towards His glory. God is both the starting point and the end point. In this process, the practitioner of scientific theology is fascinated by and admires the richer and fuller knowledge of God. All in all, '[theology] is not just a knowing, much less a comprehending; it is better and more glorious than that: it is the knowledge which is life, "eternal life" (John 17:3).'[94]

C. Summary

Bavinck's scientific theology is built up with both the intellectual and the doxological natures. It is probable that this is reflective of the continuing effect of Bavinck's editing work of *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* on himself. According to *Synopsis*, 'The glory of God is the highest goal of Theology, whereby He has prepared this glory only for himself, because He is all-sufficient unto himself and is in want of nothing, and because not a thing can be added to Him by our doing.'[95] The perichoresis of knowing and praising God consists in the reality of revelation—that is, God's self-revelation is inseparable from His glory. This reminds us of the truth that doxology and theological intelligence belong together. This distinctly corresponds with Bavinck's twofold notion of faith, that is, as intellectual and religious. Thus, scientific theology should not merely be the pearl of great price but also the yeast that leavens the whole human life; of course, this leavening effect should be actualised in the sphere of science, the university *par excellence*. Furthermore, Bavinck defines doxology as universal rather than merely ecclesial. In so doing, his doxologically scientific theology goes beyond the borders of the Church and comes to engagement with the other sciences so as to glorify God in every sphere of science. Furthermore, for Bavinck, doxologically scientific theology is initiated by God for His glory. By this *exitus-reditus* scheme, the practitioner of doxologically scientific theology is obedient to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, actively probes into the Word of God, and wholeheartedly enjoys what God has revealed. 'Dogmatics, therefore, is not a dull and arid

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[94] *RD*, 1:621; *GD*, 1:591. Bavinck's saying here enriches what he wrote in a letter to Snouck Hurgronje in 1883. There, Bavinck argued that according to the nature of theology, 'theology is knowing about God.' Theolog is concerning the two questions: 'How can I know God? And, how can I obtain the eternal life?' He added that one cannot have the eternal life without knowing God. "Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, Kampen, 8 februari 1883," in de Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse Vriendschap*, 110-111. By comparison, it can be seen that the idea of perichoresis of theology's intellectual and doxological natures has not emerged in Bavinck's early career but emerged later in his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

[95] Te Velde, *Synopsis of a Purer Theology, Volume 1*, 43.

science. It is a theodicy, a *doxology* to all God's virtues and perfections, a hymn of adoration and thanksgiving, a "glory to God in the highest."'[96]

IV. Conclusion

This chapter and chapter four together seek to trace the affinity of the five rationales left by chapter three in order to describe the grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology. As mentioned in the beginning of chapter four, the singularity of the word "grammar" implies that these rationales are correlative such that they constitute an indivisible unity. Expressed organically, the grammar is an organism, and the five rationales are interconnected and intertwined, and make up an *exitus-reditus* scheme.

Viewed in this light, Pass's suggestion of organismectomy is cast into doubt. He contends that 'the organism's purpose is the reconciliation of subject and object, the real and the ideal, and the mechanical and the teleological, and that the correspondence of these pairs is ordered to the organism's teleology.' Then, he estimates that 'the organism drives the psychologizing impulse which shifts the centre of the system away from the person of Christ toward immediate self-consciousness.'[97] Having pointed out this defect, Pass sets forth four reasons to justify his argument for the removal of organism.[98] First, the idea of organism belongs solely to philosophical apparatus of Bavinck's system. Second, organismectomy will strengthen 'the correlation of dogmatics with general criteria', which are, as Hans Frei defines, 'general criteria of intelligibility, coherence, and truth that [theology] must share with other academic discipline.'[99] Third, organismectomy refrains dogmatics from being usurped by general criteria. Fourth, newer philosophical grammars—for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language—could lend support to Bavinck's dogmatic system to defend the correspondence between subject and object without the idea of organism.

The weakness of Pass's suggestion lies in his reduction of Bavinck's organic thinking as serving primarily for the reconciliation of subject and object. The *exitus-reditus* scheme and the singular grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology robustly demonstrate that the idea of organism cannot operate on its own. Instead, organicism has to be concatenated with the other four rationales. As such, organicism does *not* belong solely to philosophical apparatus; the doxological teleology and dialectical catholicity together guarantee a healthy correlation of

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[96] *RD*, 1:112; *GD*, 1:89-90; emphasis added.
[97] Pass, "'The Heart of Dogmatics'," 195.
[98] *Ibid.*, 196-199.
[99] Hans W. Frei, *The Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 2.

dogmatics and general criteria without the risk of usurping the former by the latter. The fall of Pass's first three reasons invalidates the fourth. In short, Pass's suggestion of organismectomy stems from his neglect of the *exitus-reditus* scheme that characterises the grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology.

Moreover, the analysis of each rationale above manifests the fact that both the texture and the apparatus of the grammar are grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. This Trinitarian character of the grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology can be formulated by the four statements below.

> (1) The grammar of scientific theology is Trinitarian *insofar as* scientific theology is embedded with the *exitus-reditus* scheme, that is, being grounded in the self-revelation of the Triune God and moving on to glorify Him.
>
> (2) The grammar of scientific theology is Trinitarian *insofar as* scientific theology is orchestrated by the dogma of the knowledge of the Triune God and expands continuously by the Holy Spirit to bear a richer testimony to the work of Jesus Christ and the glory of the Triune God.
>
> (3) The grammar of scientific theology is Trinitarian *insofar as* both the Logos and the Holy Spirit involve into the human subjective appropriation of the objective revelation of God so that humans are enlightened (by the Logos) and illuminated (by the Holy Spirit) to knowing God in praising.
>
> (4) The grammar of scientific theology is Trinitarian *insofar as* the practitioner of scientific theology commits to the church of Christ, is driven by the Holy Spirit to cherish the divine revelation as introduced into the consciousness of the Church, and catholically glorifies the Triune God in places where God has revealed Himself.

The four statements are reflective of the *exitus-reditus* scheme that is innate to the grammar. Scientific theology must flow from the Triune God on account of God's self-revelation and return to the Triune God by virtue of the divine self-glorification. The *exitus-reditus* scheme displays how the dogma of the knowledge of the Triune God occupies the central place in Bavinck's dogmatics on the one hand, and on the other hand, corresponds with the reason for Bavinck's adoption of the Trinitarian scheme to articulate the content of dogmatics. That is, 'God is beginning and end, alpha and omega. … All things are from God and unto God. The trinitarian scheme guards against a barren uniformity and guarantees life, development, process.'[100] It suffices to draw a conclusion that the Trinitarian grammar proves Bavinck's

[100] *RD*, 1:111; *GD*, 1:89. This trinitarian scheme is summarised well by Eglinton as follows: 'Following its setting forth of theology's firs principles (Volume One: Prolegomena), Bavinck's Dogmatics unfolds along an explicitly theocentric pattern. Volume Two, God and Creation is overwhelmingly concerned with God the Father. Volume Three, Sin and Salvation in Christ emphasizes the redemptive work of God the Son. The onus of Volume Four, Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation, is God the Spirit, who applies everything accomplished by the Son.' Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 89-90. This Trinitarian thought is also applied

identity of Trinitarian theologian. What is more, the singular Trinitarian grammar of scientific theology gives shape to a meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system, which not only incorporates the paradigm of the organic reading but also epitomises the methodological characteristics and fundamental themes of Bavinck's theology.

On this basis, it must be asked: How broad is the range of the *exitus-reditus* scheme of Bavinck's enterprise of scientific theology? The grammar into which the five rationales integrated has shown that Bavinck's scientific theology is not limited to the circle of the Christian religion. Rather, it has the inside-outside movement, which starts from the Christian faith and aims to reach the end of the scientific world. The scientificity of theology, for Bavinck, does not only consist in theology *per se*, but is also embodied in its interaction with the other sciences, to which we now turn.

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to Bavinck's Christian worldview; John Bolt, *Bavinck On the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 138-143; Ragusa, "The Trinity at the Center of Thought and Life," 162-165. In this light, Eric Bristley rightly notes that '[o]ne of the strengths of Bavinck's theology is his profound understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. He developed what may be termed a "Trinitarian methodology."' Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)*, 21-22.

Elsewhere, Bavinck also expresses this *exitus-reditus* scheme: 'From God all things are, and accordingly they all return to Him. … For this reason the Calvinist in all things recurs upon God, and does not rest satisfied before he has traced back everything to the sovereign good-pleasure of God as its ultimate and deepest cause.' Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," 4.

Chapter 6 'The Unassumed Is the Unhealed': Bavinck's Christological Approach to the Relationship between Theology and the Other Sciences

> [I]t is absolutely not that theology would want to rule its sisters by coercion or by force to bind them to her proclamations. It only befits her as *Regina*, like Christ the King, to rule and win over with moral and spiritual weapons.[1]
>
> Herman Bavinck

I. Introduction

In his defence of the two natures of Jesus Christ against Apollinarius's Christology, Gregory Nazianzus upholds the basic principle: 'The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved.'[2] Gregory makes it clear that the theology of the incarnation is pivotal for the restoration of the human communion with God.

Gregory's slogan is an interpretative instrument by which Bavinck's view of the relationship between theology and the other sciences can be comprehended in a better way for the following three reasons. First, as the quote used to introduce this chapter shows, Bavinck does apply the office of Christ to the description of this relationship metaphorically. Moreover, the Logos Christology that is so significant to scientific theology (as has been argued in chapter 4) is indispensable for the articulation of the dialogue between theology and the other sciences. Second, insofar as dogmatics for Bavinck is characterised by its divine-human quality—that is, dogma is grounded in the Word of God but articulated by human beings[3]—scientific theology or dogmatics certainly resembles the other sciences in that the latter is also made up of human intellectual activities. In this light, Gregory's "the unassumed" corresponds to Bavinck's critique of a separatist theology that is thoroughly divorced from the other sciences and merely stays within the bulwark of the Church. Third, Bavinck stresses that theology is responsible for regaining the other sciences in such a sense that theology as the humble Queen will lead the other science and sing praise to God with them at the eschaton. On this score, Gregory's "the unhealed" represents Bavinck's condemnation of theology's failure to exert spiritual and moral impact on the other sciences.

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[1] *WHG*, 34-35. Dutch original: 'Er ligt hierin volstrekt niet, dat de Theologie hare zusteren zou willen beheerschen door dwang of met geweld binden aan haar uitspraak. Haar als »Regina" past het, evenals Christus den Koning, alleen te regeeren en te verwinnen door zedelijke en geestelijke wapenen.'

[2] Gregory of Nazianzus, "Letter 101: The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter," in *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham, ed. John Behr (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 101.5.

[3] Chapter 3, III.

From the vantage point of Gregory's slogan, my intention is to demonstrate that based on his Trinitarian scientific theology, Bavinck adopts a Christological model to build the relationship between theology and the other sciences. In what follows, I will locate Bavinck's point of view in what was for him a life-defining historical context, namely the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates, of which he was at the centre. Then, I proceed to explore Bavinck's view of the relationship between theology and the other sciences according to the themes debated by Kuyper and Lindeboom. In so doing, Bavinck-Lindeboom debates come to the fore. Finally, I will examine Bavinck's perspective on theology as the Queen of the sciences, which unveils the Christological and eschatological character.

II. The University or the Seminary: The Kuyper-Lindeboom Debates

Lucas Lindeboom (1845-1933) was appointed alongside Bavinck as a professor at the Theological School in Kampen on 9 January 1883.[4] Unlike his colleague Bavinck, who aligned himself with Kuyper, Lindeboom was Kuyper's public antagonist. The causes of Lindeboom's disagreement with Kuyper were multifaceted. R. H. Bremmer observes that Lindeboom's resolved and goal-oriented personality largely shaped his sectarian or separatist character.[5] Indeed, this strong personality played a vital role in the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates.

Given this chapter's focus on Bavinck's view of the relationship between theology and the other sciences, I shall single out the two themes of the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates—Kuyper's notions of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia.

A. Sphere Sovereignty: Modern or Orthodox?

The foremost controversial topic between Lindeboom and Kuyper was concerning the latter's idea of sphere sovereignty. Kuyper officially announced the idea of sphere sovereignty by the inaugural speech on *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (literally: Sovereignty in its own circle) in 1880.[6] By sphere sovereignty, he means that 'this supreme Sovereign [the Triune God] once and still delegates his authority to human beings, so that on earth one never directly encounters God Himself in visible things but always sees his sovereign authority exercised in *human*

[4] On further, see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 136-137; Gleason, *Herman Bavinck*, 94-95, 107-108.
[5] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten* (Kampen: Kok, 1966), 48-49.
[6] Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring. Rede ter inwijding van de Vrije Universiteit* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880); Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," ed. and trans. James D. Bratt in *Abrahan Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 461-490. Kuyper has already elaborated on some themes of this speech six year earlier; Abraham Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme, oorsprong en waarborg onzer constitutioneele vrijheden* (Amsterdam: B. van der Land, 1874). A helpful analysis on the connection between these two texts, see James D. Bratt, "Sphere Sovereignty among Abraham Kuyper's Other Political Theories," in *Politics, Religion, and Sphere Sovereignty*, ed. Gordon Graham, Kuyper Center Review, vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 36-44.

office.'[7] As per human office, there are different spheres of human life, such as the spheres of morality and science, which have their own sovereignty within their own domain.[8] George Harinck points out that Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty at the time did not draw wide academic attention.[9] It was Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) who reconstructed the idea into full-fledged philosophy.[10] Nonetheless, the idea of sphere sovereignty has become the battlefield between Lindeboom and Kuyper in the late nineteenth century.

In his speech on the thirty-ninth anniversary of the founding of the Theological School in Kampen in 1894, Lindeboom explicitly attacked Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty. This attack reflected the differences between the views of theology held at the Theological School in Kampen and at Kuyper's own Free University. Basically, Kuyper maintains that scientific theology functions in a university department without reference to the church, whereas for Lindeboom theology is entirely churchly in character. Lindeboom contended:

> The alleged "sovereignty of science" … seems to me to originate more from the circle of Descartes and Spinoza's thoughts than from the Word of God. In the entire Scripture, I do not read a single word on knowledge or science as an independent power, much less of a theological science outside and above the Church. … A higher unity of sciences other than in Christ … can only be imagined by the philosophy of the world, which always intended to put the sacred theology under its laws and to mock it, as Hagar and Ishmael have done to Sarah and Isaac.[11]

It is explicit that central to Lindeboom's critique is the claim that the idea of sphere sovereignty (as applied in this instance to scientific theology) does not issue from the Holy Scriptures and subordinates theology to the standard of the other sciences. R. H. Bremmer remarks that Lindeboom feared that Kuyper's encyclopaedic views and the Free University would lead to the secularisation of theology and the neo-Kantian ideal of science, which would entail by consequence that a new scientific yoke would be imposed on the Church and theology would

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[7] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," 466.
[8] *Ibid.*, 467.
[9] Nonetheless, Kuyper's notion of sphere sovereignty did obtain certain scholarly attention at the time, especially among the neo-Calvinist circle; Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good," 159; P. Biesterveld, *Zelfzucht en Zelfverloochening* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1896), 74.
[10] George Harinck, "A Historian's Comment on the Use of Abraham Kuyper's Idea of Sphere Sovereignty," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 5, no. 1 (2002): 279.
[11] Lucas Lindeboom, *Godgeleerden* (Heusden: A. Gezelle Meerburg, 1894), 33. Dutch original: 'De zoogenaamde „Souvereiniteit der Wetenschap" … schijnt mij toe meer uit den gedachtenkring van Cartesius en Spinoza dan uit het Woord Gods te zijn ontsproten. In geheel de Schrift lees ik geen enkel woord van kennis of wetenschap als zelfstandige macht, veel min van een theologische wetenschap buiten en boven de Gemeente … Een hoogere eenheid der wetenschappen anders dan in Christus … kan alleen de wijsbegeerte der wereld zich inbeelden, die steeds er op uit was, de Sancta Theologia onder hare wetten te stellen en te bespotten, gelijk Hagar en Ismaël aan Sara en Izak hebben gedaan.'

be detached from its root of faith.[12] In order to avoid such a subordination, Lindeboom believed, theology must be practised within the orbit of the Church alone rather than in the university. As Lindeboom argued one page earlier, the idea of sphere sovereignty eventually coordinates God and the divine things with the sense-perceptible and finite things.[13]

Lindeboom offered further clarification in the note on the quotation above. He straightforwardly pointed to Kuyper's *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, arguing that the Reformed fathers who were free from Cartesian philosophy did not agree with the sovereignty of science. According to him, moreover, theological modernism results from applying Cartesian and Spinoza's thoughts to theology.[14] Hence, it is only through the subordinating of theological studies to the governance of the Church that Reformed theology can accord to the Reformed tradition.[15]

Lindeboom's critique comes down to this question: Is Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty modern or orthodox? In other words, is this idea really the consequence of Cartesian and Spinoza's philosophies? In order to answer this question, we should locate Kuyper's argument in the context of Kuyper's speech on sphere sovereignty in 1880. Lindeboom's criticism was caused by Kuyper's endorsement of Spinoza in that address:

> Spinoza grasped the sovereignty of [science] in its own sphere, and therefore, measured on a moral scale, our admiration for Spinoza's character is as great as our disapproval of the insipid Erasmus. Both organ and perception were faulty with Spinoza, so his conclusion had to be false as well. But seeing what he did and as he did, he steadfastly refused to lend himself to a violation of the sovereignty of [science] in its own sphere.[16]

Despite Kuyper's positive evaluation of Spinoza's insistence on the sovereignty of science, we still need to ask: What is the essence of Kuyper's appreciative attitude toward Spinoza in the immediate context of the speech? This question is substantially related to Kuyper's notions of sphere and sovereignty. To put it another way, Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty can be identified as modern (rather than orthodox) provided that the immediate context of the statement above shows that Cartesian and Spinoza's philosophies are the origin of Kuyper's notions of both sphere and sovereignty.

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[12] Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten*, 85.
[13] Lindeboom, *Godgeleerden*, 32.
[14] *Ibid.*, 33, note 22.
[15] *Ibid.*, 79-80.
[16] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," 476-477. Here, I revise the English translation, substituting "science" for "learning" as the equivalent of *wetenschap*. The quotation from this English edition will translate the Dutch *wetenschap* to science consistently.

A close look at Kuyper's speech unveils the fact that Kuyper never grounds the notions of sphere and sovereignty in modern philosophy. One paragraph immediately before Kuyper's appreciation of Spinoza, Kuyper has clearly stated: '[Science] creates its own life sphere in which truth is sovereign. Under no circumstances may violation of its life-law be tolerated. That would not only dishonor [science] but be sin before God.'[17] Inasmuch as God has created a life-law within the sphere of science, He is the ultimate foundation of the notions of both sphere and sovereignty. This theocentric essence of sphere sovereignty has been plainly set forth several pages earlier. There, Kuyper raises a challenge to his audiences:

> If you believe in Him as Deviser and Creator, as Founder and Director of all things, your soul must also proclaim the Triune God as the only absolute Sovereign. Provided—and this I would emphasize—we acknowledge at the same time that this supreme Sovereign once and still delegates his authority to human beings, so that on earth one never directly encounters God Himself in visible things but always sees his sovereign authority exercised in *human* office.[18]

Needless to say, for Kuyper, sphere sovereignty is rooted in the divine delegation which has come to pass via creation and confirms God's sovereignty as supreme. Given the diverse activities of human beings, Kuyper argues for various spheres—for example, the sphere of morality, the sphere of science and the sphere of social life. 'And because each comprises its own domain, each has its own Sovereign within its bounds.'[19]

Kuyper's insistence on the sovereignty of each sphere must be read together with his emphasis on God's absolute sovereignty. The connection between the two sorts of sovereignty is actualised by the Kingship of Jesus Christ.[20] Hence, whilst arguing for the sovereignty of science and the independence of theological studies in the university (not governed by the Church), Kuyper recognises the Kingship of Christ over scientific theology. That is to say, theological studies in the university are directly accountable to Christ rather than to the Church.

The analysis of Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty hitherto has demonstrated that Lindeboom's critique is *de facto* the consequence of his misreading of Kuyper. He seems to exaggerate Kuyper's appreciation of Spinoza.[21] In Kuyper's speech, the name "Spinoza"

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[17] *Ibid.*, 476.
[18] *Ibid.*, 466.
[19] *Ibid.*, 467.
[20] *Ibid.*, 464-467. The relationship between the Kingship of Christ and sphere sovereignty is also clarified in Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege: Living Under Christ's Kingship, Volume 1: The Exalted Nature of Christ's Kingship* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2016), 352-360. Therein, Kuyper sets forth the order of kingdoms or spheres, arguing that Christ occupies the highest place.
[21] Indeed, neo-Calvinism led by Kuyper and Bavinck is different to Spinoza's philosophy. Bavinck's contemporary theologian Bastiaan Wielenga sets forth seven pairs of the essentially different ideas between neo-Calvinism and Spinozism: theistic *versus* naturally pantheistic, personal and supernatural God who

appears only four times but in one paragraph. In view of the publication date of Lindeboom's *Godgeleerden* (1894) (the year when the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates became more drastic), I suspect that Lindeboom's misreading was probably deliberate to lend support to his own argument that defended the Theological School in Kampen and opposed the theological faculty of the Free University.

In 1892, the Christian Reformed Church (Bavinck's denomination) and the *Doleantie* churches (Kuyper's denomination) were united as the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*). Nonetheless, the union of theological training was lagging. The question about the relationship between the two theological institutions had already been raised at the Synod of Amsterdam in 1882 and discussed in the Synod of Dordrecht in 1893 and the Synod of Middelburg in 1896.[22] The deputies of the Christian Reformed Church who sided themselves with Lindeboom rejected a kind of scientific theology in the university. Although there were also seceders like Bavinck and Petrus Biesterveld (1863-1908)—who was Bavinck's colleague and moved to the Free University together with Bavinck—who were more open to Kuyper and the Free University, the separatist and conservative constantly stressed that theological studies should be practised under the supervision of the Church. In this light, it appears that by asserting that Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty was grounded in modern philosophy, Lindeboom was bolstering his efforts to denounce Kuyper's claim that scientific theology should be undertaken in the university without the supervision the Church.

On this issue, Lindeboom's efforts were preoccupied with his immediate ecclesial context, and ignored the wider historical context of Kuyper's claims. George Harinck reminds us of the significance of the French Revolution for grasping Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty. In the post-Revolution age, '[s]overeignty was no longer seen as a religious matter; it was a purely rational matter. The word sovereignty became closely related to the word autonomy. It was no longer God who was king of kings, but reason.'[23] In my estimation, Kuyper's intention was to restore the religious implication and foundation of sovereignty at the time. As Harinck

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reveals Himself *versus* world-event as natural event, confessional *versus* the human defining of God's essence, the incarnation *versus* the denial of the incarnation, repentance as the starting point of the moral life *versus* repentance having no moral value, the antithesis between good and evil *versus* moral law identified with natural law, doxologically teleological life *versus* non-teleological and non-doxological life; Bastiaan Wielenga, "Calvinisme en Spinozisme," *Stemmen des tijds* 1 (1911): 669-670.

[22] See George Harinck and Wim Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek: Geschiedenis van de Theologische Universiteit Kampen* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2018), 111-114; Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten*, 77-109; Gleason, *Herman Bavinck*, 154-169, 200-202.

[23] Harinck, "A Historian's Comment on the Use of Abraham Kuyper's Idea of Sphere Sovereignty," 280. Kuyper's view of the French Revolution can be seen in Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 3.

insightfully observes, the emphasis of Kuyper's methodology falls on the order of creation. 'Sovereignty is authority, delegated to man by his Creator. Understood in this way, sovereignty has more to do with responsibility than with right. Sovereignty is the vocation of different spheres to follow Christ. God delegated his sovereignty equally to all.'[24]

Harinck's observation on the Christocentric character of the idea of sphere sovereignty coincides with Kuyper's concluding prayer in his inaugural speech on sphere sovereignty in 1880, which was omitted in its eventual English translation. Kuyper said:

> And you who test our soul, O also the Judge (*Rechter*) of our nation and also the Judge (*Oordeelaar*) of the schools of science, demolish the walls of this Institution and nullify it before Your countenance by yourself, if it ever means something else, ever would desire something else other than the boast in the sovereign, the freely mighty grace, which is in the cross of the Son, Your tenderest love![25]

Clearly, while stressing the sovereignty of science and scientific theology, Kuyper ultimately surrendered the Free University to the absolute divine sovereignty as revealed in Jesus Christ.

What has been demonstrated suffices to highlight the theocentric and Christocentric essence of Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty. Granted that Lindeboom offered a misleading critique of Kuyper, it is still true that their views of the location (and nature) of theological studies fundamentally differed and were irreconcilable. This is further evidenced by Lindeboom's critique of Kuyper's view of theological encyclopaedia.

B. Theological Encyclopaedia: Religious Science?

In a booklet that was probably published in 1885, Lindeboom expressly put forth his negative estimation on theological encyclopaedia in Dutch universities. (It should be noted that the Free University was founded in 1880.) It could be argued that Lindeboom's critique directly challenged Kuyper's theological encyclopaedia, though Kuyper's work was published nine years later. Lindeboom drew a verdict that the encyclopaedia taught in Dutch universities at the time was not pure insofar as it taught not only theology but also religious science that was

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[24] Harinck, "A Historian's Comment on the Use of Abraham Kuyper's Idea of Sphere Sovereignty," 281.

[25] Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, 44. Dutch original: 'En Gij die ons de nieren proeft, o Rechter ook van onze natie en Oordeelaar ook van de scholen der wetenschap, breek zelf de muren dezer Stichting af, en delg ze uit van voor Uw aangezicht, indien ze ooit iets anders bedoelen, ooit iets anders willen zou, dan te roemen in die souvereine, die vrijmachtige genade, die er is in het kruis van den Zoon Uwer teederste liefde!'

Kuyperian scholarship seems to ignore that Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty is also intimately related to his spirituality and devotional life. Kuyper's meditation on Luke 2:8 leads to the conclusion that each sphere of human life has its own shepherd; Abraham Kuyper, *Honey from the Rock: Daily Devotions from Young Kuyper*, trans. James A. De Jong (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018), 342.

heartless and headless in the modern form and material.[26] In other words, the idea of encyclopaedia gave Lindeboom the impression that it confused theology with religious science.

Lindeboom's critique of encyclopaedia in 1885 was not closely related to his rejection of Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty. However, this connection became clear later in *Godgeleerden* (Theologians) (1894). It may be that this was due to the publication of Kuyper's three-volume *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* shortly before.[27]

Following the principle of his rejection of sphere sovereignty, Lindeboom proceeded to spell out his criticism of theological encyclopaedia after explicating his own notion of scientific theology. Again, he maintained that theology is a science only in terms of the knowledge of God. This means that theology as a science only serves the Church and the ministry of the Word of God.[28] In other words, inasmuch as the Word of God and the knowledge of God have been bestowed to the Church, theology can only be scientifically undertaken under the supervision of the Church. Based on this rationale, Lindeboom recognised a theological encyclopaedia within the orbit of the Church. He argued:

> And I also hope that you will realise that however one might be able to or wish to widen the circle of theological science, all the sciences that one joins into theological encyclopaedia must be only in *service* to the *knowledge of God* and to its meaning before God and the Church and thus derives its value.[29]

From this vantage point, it can be inferred that for Lindeboom there is no so-called theological encyclopaedia in the university; the only *bona fide* theological encyclopaedia thoroughly derives its existence from the Church. Thus, Lindeboom asserted that theological encyclopaedia retains its independence only within the Church and has nothing to do with general encyclopaedia in the university. In this light, he insisted, the idea of university as manifested by the Free University at the time, was false.[30]

Kuyper's contradistinction with Lindeboom is clear. To a large extent, the divergence between their views is due to Kuyper's definition of encyclopaedia. Kuyper contends: 'The idea of Encyclopaedia lies in the conception that the several parts of human knowledge are

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[26] Lucas Lindeboom, *Het doctoraat in de heilige godgeleerdheid aan de Theologische School der Christ. Geref. Kerk* (Netherlands: [s. n.], [1885]), 13.
[27] The preface of the first edition of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie* is dated 20 December 1893, whereas the *Godgeleerden* was Lindeboom's speech on 8 or 9 December 1894 (39th anniversary of the establishment of the Theological School in Kampen).
[28] Lindeboom, *Godgeleerden*, 40.
[29] *Ibid.*, 42. Dutch original: 'En ook dit zult gij, hoop ik, beseffen, dat, hoe men den kring der Theol. wetenschap ook mocht kunnen of willen verbroeden, al de wetenschappen, die men in de theol. encyclopaedie vereenigt, allen *dienstbaar* moeten zijn aan de *Godskennis*, en aan haar heur beteekenis voor God en de Gemeente en dus hare waarde ontleenen.'
[30] *Ibid.*, 74.

related to each other, and that it is possible and necessary for our mind to penetrate into this relation and to explicate it.'[31] Following this, a specifically *theological* encyclopaedia refers to 'the scientific investigation into the organic existence and relation of Theology in itself and as an integral part of the organism of science.'[32] Hence, theological encyclopaedia cannot rest until it is located within the organism of general science.[33] From this vantage point, it can be perceived that Kuyper aims to confirm an organic view of science, in which theology has a due place. Granted, Kuyper's effort reflects the struggle for the freedom of education in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, which should be freed from the domination of the State and the Church.[34]

Lindeboom is partly correct in that Kuyper painstakingly makes an attempt to liberate theological encyclopaedia from the Church. However, Lindeboom fails to discern the idiosyncrasy of Kuyper's ecclesiology. Kuyper contends:

> The Church as an institute, founded by man, is built after the rule of the special principium, as this speaks to us from the Holy Scripture. Hence the churchly institute can borrow support from the special principium, but not the special principium from the churchly institute. But what is true on the other hand—and this is the position which we defend—is, that faith in this special principium is supported and maintained by the churchly community, i.e. by the *non*-instituted but organically present communion mutual among believers.[35]

Clearly, there is twofold aspect of Kuyper's notion of the visible Church: the institutional and the organic.

> The institutional church finds her province bounded by her *offices*, and these offices are limited to the ministry of the Word, the Sacraments, Benevolence, and Church government. These are the only offices that have been appointed as special functions in her life. All other expressions of Christian life do not work by the organ of the special offices, but by the organs of the re-created natural life.[36]

James Eglinton offers an incisive observation that for Kuyper 'the church as institution serves as a safe haven for believers in the world, whereas the visible church organically spreads throughout the wider culture,' which underlies the way by which and the reason why believers

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[31] *EST*, 15; *EHG*, 1:16.
[32] *EHG*, 1:55-56; *EST*, 54; rev.
[33] *EST*, 58; *EHG*, 2:3.
[34] Kuyper, *Calvinism*, 167-168; cf. Peter S. Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 181.
[35] *EST*, 392-393; *EHG*, 2:346-347.
[36] *EST*, 588; *EHG*, 2:542.

should step into the world outside the institutional church.[37] As John Wood observes, for Kuyper, 'the institution belonged not to the being or essence of the church (*wezen or esse*) but to the well-being of the church (*welwezen or bene esse*).'[38] On this basis, we come to the corollary that for Kuyper the Church from which theology should be liberated is the institutional insofar as many factors of human life outside institutional church——science being a crucial one—exert a significant impact on the Christian faith.[39] Grounded in the theology of the organically visible church, the genuine scientific theology should be conducted in the university since it must engage with the other sciences.

Lindeboom's neglect of Kuyper's organically visible church is already latent in their earlier debate on the Office of Doctrine within the Church. Kuyper maintains that the ecclesial Office of Doctor serves to train the ministers of the word of God and has its place in the seminary; therefore, it differs from the university title of Doctor. If the ecclesial Doctors who are appointed by the Church wish to obtain the university doctorate, they should take part in the proper university examination of studies and godliness.[40] The principle of the examination of one's godliness indirectly attests Kuyper's concern regarding the organically visible church. Lindeboom offers a serious response to Kuyper's insistence on the scientific authority of the university. He restrains the freedom of scientific theology within the confines of the Church, arguing that a sound theological education is only to serve the Church. On this basis, the status of doctor is also granted by the Church 'through its courtyard of holy science', that is, the Theological School in Kampen.[41] It is clear that, to speak in Kuyper's language, Lindeboom's concern is about the ecclesiastical institution. In other words, Lindeboom fails to discern Kuyper's hidden connection between theological encyclopaedia in the university and the church that is organically a visible communion.

C. Summary

While Lindeboom argues that theological studies can only be properly carried out under the governance of the Church, Kuyper stands starkly on the opposite side, arguing that scientific theology only exists in the university. To speak in Gregory of Nazianzus's

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[37] Eglinton, "To Transcend and to Transform," 178-179. Cf. John Halsey Wood, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 172-173.
[38] Wood, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*, 89.
[39] Cf. *EST*, 577-578; *EHG*, 2:532.
[40] Abraham Kuyper, *Tractaat van de Reformatie der Kerken. Aan de Zonen der Reformatie Hier te Lande op Luthers Vierde Eeuwfeest* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Zoon, 1884), 64.
[41] Lindeboom, *Het doctoraat in de heilige godgeleerdheid*, 11.

Christological formula, Lindeboom offers the stance of "the unassumed" that theology is sacred and within the Church insofar as it totally concerns the knowledge of God and divine things and thus has nothing to do with the other sciences that are secular. On the contrary, Kuyper's stance stresses "the assumed" but seems to belittle the importance of "what is united with God" so that he underscores the independence of theological studies in the university and the close relationship between theology and the other sciences, but seems to cut off the relationship between scientific theology and the institutional church.

The ideas of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia unveil one significant cause of Lindeboom and Kuyper's divergence, that is, their differing notions of the Church. Lindeboom stresses the church as institution so that theology must be undertaken under ecclesial supervision. By contrast, Kuyper lays emphasis on the organically visible church. Hence, theological encyclopaedia and scientific theology can be actualised in the university alone, for theology can be practised in freedom from the institutional church. In what follows, I will demonstrate that Bavinck neither thoroughly follows Kuyper nor approves of Lindeboom's strategy to deal with the relationship between scientific theology and the other sciences, that is, the question on where scientific theology should be practised.

III. Bavinck's Middle Way

As a leading neo-Calvinist theologian, it is beyond doubt that Bavinck was closely connected to yet not identical with Kuyper in this respect. Lindeboom also realised that Bavinck was the leading figure of his opponents.[42] However, this does not mean that Bavinck agreed with Kuyper *in toto*. In what follows, I will demonstrate that if we liken Lindeboom's and Kuyper's viewpoints as two extremes, Bavinck's stance is somewhere between them, albeit certainly closer to Kuyper's. This also combats a conventional argument that Bavinck's theology imitates or even is identical with Kuyper's.[43]

I will explicate Bavinck's mediating position according to the two debated themes: sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia. My primary intention is to lay out the difference between Kuyper and Bavinck in these perspectives, in the course of which the Lindeboom-Bavinck debates will be evident.[44]

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[42] Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten*, 89.
[43] For example, Bastian Kruithof, "The Relation of Christianity and Culture in the Teaching of Herman Bavinck" (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1955), 12.
[44] Bremmer points out that Lindeboom's opposition to Bavinck was caused by his controversy with Kuyper; Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten*, 49.

A. Sphere Sovereignty

Kuyper's speech on sphere sovereignty is so well-known that Bavinck's discourse on this theme is generally ignored. Bavinck furnished a concise discussion on the notions of sovereignty and the sovereignty of science in a short newspaper article on 11 April 1902.[45] The publication date is critical as Bavinck resigned his post in Theological School in Kampen on 30 October 1902 and moved to the Free University to take the post of the Professor of Theology, delivering his inaugural address there on 17 December 1902.[46] Bavinck's action clearly evidences his eventual alignment with Kuyper and rejection of Lindeboom's stance. Viewed in this light, Bavinck's 'Souvereiniteit der wetenschap' (The Sovereignty of Science) is one significant manifesto of his movement to Amsterdam.

Bavinck unambiguously unveils his stand at the outset: 'The sovereignty of science is a beautiful word, a charming slogan and also an expression of a glorious undertaking. But it can easily serve as a resounding phrase, which, by its fascinating strength, makes forgotten what it is to express.'[47] Two points stand out in this statement. First, Bavinck was supportive of the debated theme of sphere sovereignty, which was primarily focused on the sovereignty of science at the time. This was consistent with his siding with Kuyper that scientific theology should be undertaken in the *universitas scientiarum*.[48] Second, Bavinck's purpose was to clarify the idea of the sovereignty of science. He was not unaware of the Kuyper-Lindeboom debate in this regard. In explicating this idea, it could be argued, Bavinck wished to ask Lindeboom to do justice to the sovereignty of science, and also to justify his own move to the Free University. Apart from the two points, one would anticipate that Bavinck implicitly took issue with Kuyper's idea of the sovereignty of science in several perspectives, as will be shown below.

Having set forth his basic stance in the article, Bavinck argued alongside Kuyper that the absolute sovereignty belongs only to the God who is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Ruler and the Lord of all things. Sovereignty on the creaturely level is understood in a derived sense—that is, creaturely sovereignty is the derivative of divine sovereignty.[49] Again, Bavinck argued

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[45] Herman Bavinck, "Souvereiniteit der wetenschap," *De Bazuin* 50, no. 15 (11 April 1902). The typesetting splits the page into five columns; Bavinck's article occupies the 2-4 columns. Citations hereafter will refer to the column number.
[46] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*.; Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 75-135.
[47] Bavinck, "Souvereiniteit der wetenschap," column 2.
[48] *RD*, 1:54. In his biography of Bavinck, Eglinton points out that there was a contrast about Bavinck's public and private statements concerning theological studies in a university or a seminary. 'Privately, Bavinck was less than convinced of what might be accomplished [at the Free University].' Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 220-222.
[49] Bavinck, "Souvereiniteit der wetenschap," column 2.

alongside Kuyper that there are different kinds of sovereignty on the creaturely level, such as the sovereignty of the state and the sovereignty of father in a family. And as such, there is also the sovereignty of science. Bavinck maintained that by recognising various sorts of sovereignty, we believe that 'in all these we have to do with phenomena, which have received from God their own life and in this life their own law, which we cannot violate without impunity.'[50]

The analysis hitherto shows the similarities between Kuyper and Bavinck from the perspectives of the idea of sphere sovereignty. Then, Bavinck implicitly puts forth his divergence with Kuyper. Bavinck contends:

> There is no human being, no corporation, no school, which can act and speak in the name of science. Science has no infallible prophet. *There are only scientific persons*, who, no matter how inspired with desire and diligence for the research of truth, still always remain to be fallible, subject to mistakes and errors. *Science is sovereign, but the persons who practise it have no different or higher authority than the power of the arguments*, which they bring forward for their propositions and which may be freely examined and tested by everyone.[51]

What we can perceive in the quotation above but that disappears in Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty is the clear differentiation between science and the practitioner of science. Specifically, Bavinck distinctly ascribes sovereignty to science *per se*, whereas Kuyper blurs the differentiation and seems to confer a certain degree of sovereignty on the practitioner of science.

In explicating the sovereignty of science, Kuyper stresses the role that the human consciousness plays. He contends: 'To be able to think of something that is, and thus to be able to put together in our reason what is mirrored in our consciousness, is an honor bestowed by God on our human existence. To possess wisdom is a divine trait in our being.'[52] Clearly, Kuyper's point of view is grounded in the doctrine of creation, on which the notions of sovereignty and sphere develop. As sphere sovereignty has been established by God's creation, the human consciousness that is created by God functions well in correspondence with the life-law in each sphere. In this regard, Kuyper lays more emphasis on the human subject rather than the objectivity of science. Thus, in the paragraph immediately before his commendation of

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[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid.*, columns 2-3. Dutch original: 'Er is geen enkel mensch, geen enkele corporatie, geen enkele school, die in naam van de wetenschap optreden en spreken kan. De wetenschap heeft geen onfeilbaar profeet. Er zijn slechts wetenschappelijke mannen, mannen, die, hoezeer ook met lust en ijver tot onderzoek der waarheid bezield, toch altijd feilbaar, aan vergissing en dwaling onderworpen blijven. De wetenschap is souverein, maar de mannen, die haar beoefenen, hebben geen andere of hoogere autoriteit, dan de kracht der argumenten, die zij voor hun stellingen bijbrengen en die vrij door elk onderzocht en beproefd mogen worden.'
[52] Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," 476.

Spinoza, after setting forth the claim that '[s]cholarship creates its own life sphere in which truth is sovereign', Kuyper demonstrates how the human consciousness works in acquiring the harmonious knowledge and wisdom of the world around humans, the world of the human being, the spiritual world by *aesthesis* (sense perception) and *noesis* (intelligent thought).[53] In this light, Kuyper's endorsement of Spinoza's character seems to confirm that the practitioner of science can share the sovereignty of science somewhat. This can be taken further to arrive at the corollary that the human consciousness cooperates with the sovereignty of science rather than operates under the sovereignty of science essentially.

Kuyper's claim for the Reformed principle lends robust support to his emphasis on the practitioner of science with regard to sphere sovereignty. He maintains that 'considering that something begins from principle [*met een beginsel iets begint*] and that a distinct entity takes rise from a distinct principle, we shall maintain a distinct sovereignty for *our own* principle [a Reformed principle] and for that of our opponents across the whole sphere of thought.'[54] Kuyper makes it plain that what he claims in the speech on sphere sovereignty is the sovereignty of science that is accepted by the *Reformed* person. This is distinguished from Bavinck's insistence on the object-defining character of science and the dialectical catholicity of scientific theology.[55] Hence, Bavinck emphatically repudiates that Kuyper crosses from the territory of principle to that of person, which leads Kuyper to bring forth the notion of the two kinds of science, that is, the regenerate and the unregenerate.[56] In other words, Kuyper's assertion on two kinds of science further enhances the difference between Bavinck and Kuyper in respect of sphere sovereignty. Kuyper asserts that the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit gives rise to two kinds of human consciousness. The regenerate consciousness entails regenerate science, whereas the unregenerate consciousness gives rise to unregenerate science.[57] He then draws a conclusion that 'the effort which reveals itself in our nature to obtain a scientific knowledge of the cosmos by investigation and demonstration, is ever bound to the premises in our nature from which this effort starts out.'[58] As John Bolt remarks well, for Kuyper, '[d]ifferent religious perceptions of reality result in completely different scientific conceptions. And, by extension, they result in different cultural, social, and political visions,

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[53] *Ibid*.
[54] *Ibid.*, 484; emphasis added.
[55] Chapter 3, II.B; Chapter 5, II.B.
[56] A. Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 74; cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 40. Terpstra's *Dictaat* is the notes on the lectures given by Bavinck in the years 1896-97.
[57] *EST*, 150-182; *EHG*, 2:97-132.
[58] *EST*, 180; *EHG*, 2:130.

strategies, and policies.'[59] In the end, Kuyper's viewpoint of two kinds of *wetenschap* raises the significance of epistemology above that of ontology in this regard. For him, the idea of sphere sovereignty seems to do more with epistemology than with ontology. This can be evidenced by Kuyper's argument in *Strikt genomen* (1880), which was published to declare the right to found the Free University. Therein, Kuyper sets forth eight principles to settle the relationship between the church and the Free University. The first principle is the university's right of self-employment and to 'enjoy sphere sovereignty.' Following this, Kuyper recognises in the second principle that the Church cannot exercise jurisdiction over any part of the University other than the employee who is the church's member and thus under the ecclesiastical discipline.[60] Clearly, in terms of the University-Church relationship, Kuyper places the University where knowing takes place at a superior position to the Church which the human being belongs to; thus, epistemology surpasses ontology.

Unlike Kuyper's combination of the sovereignty of science with the practitioner of science, Bavinck lays much more stress on theocentrism and Christocentrism by bringing forth the threefold meaning of the sovereignty of science. The first facet of the meaning is the same as Kuyper's. That is, 'all love for truth, all desire and passion, all power and capacity, all time and opportunity to practice science and come to truth along this way, is solely owed to God. … Science is a gift in its origin, a gift in an absolute sense, a gift that descends from the Father of lights.'[61]

The second facet of Bavinck's notion unveils his divergence from Kuyper. Bavinck contends:

> Second, the sovereignty of science implies that it has received from God its own life and in that life its own law. So it is with law, with religion, with morality, with commerce, with industry, with agriculture, with art, so it is with all things that are created by God with their own nature. So it is also with science. Whoever wants to practise it must observe rules that God has laid down for it; *he must go to work according to the method, which is determined by the Lord for science in general and for every science in particular, and which he has to trace and deduce precisely from the nature of science. Whoever holds to these rules and labours according to this method has the chance that he will arrive at truth.* Whoever despises it surrenders himself in advance to errors and mistakes. *The person of science is not*

[59] John Bolt, "Doubting Reformational Anti-Thomism," in *Aquinas Among the Protestants*, ed. Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 133.
[60] Abraham Kuyper, *Strikt genomen. Het recht tot Universiteitsstichting, staatsrechtelijk en historisch getoetst* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880), 209-210.
[61] Bavinck, "Souvereiniteit der wetenschap," column 3.

> *free*; he cannot do it with what he wants to do; he is bound to the object of his research that God has presented to his glance.[62]

On the one hand, Bavinck sets forth the foundation on which theology as a particular science should be connected to the other sciences, which is supportive of his claim that theology should be practised in the university. On the other hand, Bavinck's statement is clearly antithetical to Kuyper's two kinds of science. The life-law of the sphere of science, which has been laid down by God objectively in creation, is workable for both the regenerate and the unregenerate. This means that the sovereignty of science has nothing to do with the practitioner of science but with science *per se*. In this way, Bavinck denies the subordination of ontology to epistemology.

If the second facet of Bavinck's notion of the sovereignty of science is to counter Kuyper, the third could be reckoned as the protest against Lindeboom. Bavinck argues:

> And third, science can also be called sovereign in this sense that God leads and steers science in its progress in the history of humankind. It is His pleasure to maintain science and to bring to light its evermore richer truth. In its origin but also in its development, science is a gift of God. … . [God] *often do it against the will and the sense of schools and universities, notwithstanding the decrees and canons of popes and churches, notwithstanding the prohibitions of emperors and princes.* The power of truth is great; it will triumph because God bears and sustains it and will gain victory over all lies and errors.[63]

On this score, Bavinck resolutely defends the idea of sphere sovereignty and opposes Lindeboom's effort to bring theological studies thoroughly under the guardianship and supervision of the institutional church. However, it is worth noting that Bavinck does not separate theological studies from the institutional church in such a way that Kuyper advocates.

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[62] *Ibid.*; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'Ten tweede sluit de souvereiniteit der wetenschap in, dat deze van God een eigen leven en in dat leven een eigen wet heeft ontvangen. Zoo is het met het recht, met den godsdienst, met de zedelijkheid, met den handel, met de nijverheid, met den landbouw, met de kunst, zoo is het met alle dingen, die door God met een eigen aard geschapen zijn. Zoo is het ook met de wetenschap. Wie haar beoefenen wil, moet de regelen in acht nemen, welke God daarvoor vastgesteld heeft; hij moet te werk gaan naar de methode, welke voor de wetenschap in het algemeen en voor iedere wetenschap in het bijzonder door den Heere is bepaald en die hij juist uit de natuur der wetenschap heeft op te sporen en af te leiden. Wie aan deze regelen zich houdt en naar deze methode arbeidt, heeft kans, dat hij tot waarheid komt. Wie ze versmaadt, geeft zich van tevoren aan vergissing en dwaling over. De man der wetenschap is niet vij; hij kan met haar niet doen, wat hij wil; hij is gebonden aan het voorwerp van zijn onderzoek, dat God aan zijn blik heeft aangeboden.'

[63] *Ibid.*; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'En ten derde kan de wetenschap ook in dien zin souverein heeten, dat God die wetenschap in haar voortgang in de geschiedenis der menschheid leidt en bestuurt. Het is zijn welbehagen, om die wetenscnap in stand te houden en door haar altijd rijkere waarheid aan het licht te brengen. De wetenschap is, in haar oorsprong, maar ook in hare ontwikkeling eene gave Gods. … Hij doet het menigmaal, tegen den wil en den zin van scholen en universiteiten in, ondanks de decreten en canones van pausen en kerken, niettegenstaande de verboden van keizers en vorsten. De macht der waarheid is groot; zij zal zegevieren, omdat God haar draagt en instandhoudt en over alle leugen en dwaling de overwinning zal doen be halen. In dezen zin belijden wij zeker allen gaarne en van harte de souvereiniteit der wetenschap.'

In tackling the relationship between scientific theology and the institutional church, Bavinck again accentuates the competition between the sovereignty of science and the sovereignty of university professors (as the practitioners of science). By ascribing sovereignty to science *per se*, Bavinck leaves room for the Scripture-based confessions to which the practitioner of science is committed.[64] Needless to say, this corresponds with Bavinck's view of the presuppositional character of science, of both the general and the particular (theology) sorts.[65] Accordingly, granted that the institutional church and science have their own sphere sovereignty that is endowed by God, *the human agent* has a responsibility to undertake activities in each sphere under its respective sovereignty.

This brings about two important outcomes. First, the focal point in practising scientific theology is laid more on ontology than epistemology. That is to say, it is not theology but the theologian who should practise scientific theology in view of various sorts of sphere sovereignty. Second, the ecclesial authority is exercised *first* on a human's state of *being*, rather than a human's particular *knowing*. To put it another way, the institutional church upholds the priority of ontology over epistemology. Hence, Bavinck recognises the importance of the ecclesial authority to appoint, suspend, and dismiss theological professors in the university.

> We consider the close bond of the University with the churches, determined in the appointment and the dismissal of professors in theology, to be highly desirable for the future of the University—not a sacrifice, no decline, but an improvement for the University; and also not a sacrifice, but the ideal for "its own training" of the churches. The congregation of the Lord, if it may exist according to the Word of God, is still the pillar and firmness of truth.[66]

In short, in contrast with Kuyper and Lindeboom, Bavinck's *via media* is to defend the sovereignty of science vigorously (*contra* Lindeboom) by laying emphasis on the human agent (the practitioner of science) who serves as the junction of the institutional church and the university (*contra* Kuyper). For Bavinck, human beings deserve this honourable place on the ground of their creation in the *imago Dei*, whereby they receive the dominion over the earth and everything on it.[67]

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[64] *Ibid.*, column 4.
[65] Chapter 3, II.B, IV.B.b.
[66] Bavinck, "Souvereiniteit der wetenschap," column 4. Dutch original: 'Wij achten den nauweren band der Universiteit met de Kerken, bepaald in de benoeming en het ontslag van Hoogleeraren in de Theologie voor de toekomst der Universiteit hoogst gewenscht,—niet een offer, geen achteruitgang, maar een vooruitgang voor de Universiteit; en ook niet een offer, maar het ideaal voor „eigen opleiding" der Kerken. De Gemeente des Heeren, zoo zij naar het Woord Gods mag bestaan, is toch de pilaar en vastigheid der waarheid.'
[67] *Ibid.*, column 2.

B. Theological Encyclopaedia

As the idea of sphere sovereignty is combined with that of theological encyclopaedia in Kuyper's system, Bavinck's divergence with Kuyper in the former must be concomitant with their differences in the latter. Indeed, that Bavinck did not move to the Free University until 1902 was partly and significantly associated with his silent reservation with Kuyper's project of theological encyclopaedia. In December 1893, Bavinck was invited to be a professor at the Free University. He finally declined the invitation. Harinck and Berkelaar argue that one reason would be the publication of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology* in 1894, which stresses the freedom of theological studies without the supervision of the Church.[68]

Bavinck's disagreement with Kuyper in this regard was testified by Maarten Noordtzij (1840-1915), who was the professor of Old Testament at the Theological School in Kampen and involved deeply in the Anti-Revolutionary Party led by Kuyper. According to Noordtzij, even though Bavinck appreciated Kuyper's *Encyclopaedia* as the first Reformed encyclopaedia, he would not 'have held back comments, reservations and questions that occur while reading.' Bavinck kept silent publicly at the time, for he completely disagreed with the common suspicion of Kuyper's work, the common charge Kuyper of pantheism and falsifying theology, which threatened the existence of the Church.[69] In this light, Bavinck and Lindeboom differ. Whereas the latter is thoroughly antithetical to Kuyper's work, Bavinck sides with Kuyper and approves of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedia* in principle. This can be evidenced by Bavinck's addition that theological encyclopaedia and religious science differ fundamentally in the section of 'The Encyclopedic Place of Dogmatic Theology' of the second edition of *Reformed Dogmatics*. In the same section, Bavinck also stresses that theology as the Queen of the sciences should not be practised in the seminary but rather in the *universitas scientiarum*.[70] By arguing so, Bavinck refutes Lindeboom's critique that theological encyclopaedia is confused with religious science. Meanwhile, Bavinck points out that a purport of theological encyclopaedia is to seek for the relationship between theology and the other sciences.

Another reason underlying Bavinck's silent reservation was to keep the union of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*), which was achieved in 1892 between the Christian Reformed Church (Bavinck's denomination) and the

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[68] Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, 113. Vos's letter to Bavinck is another important cause of Bavinck's rejection of the appointment (112-113); also see "To Herman Bavinck, March 28, 1894," in Vos, *The Letters of Geerhardus Vos*, 185.

[69] M. Noordtzij, "Aan Ds. J. Westerhuis te Groningen," *De Bazuin* 44, no. 13 (27 Maart 1896). Noordtzij does not name the persons who were critical of Kuyper.

[70] *RD*, 1:50-54; *GD*, 1:27-31. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, Eerste deel, Eerste druk*, 9-14.

Doleantie churches (Kuyper's denomination). It can be imagined that Bavinck's public critique of Kuyper would have weakened the ecclesial union, which has been being swung by the debates on the relationship between the theological faculty of the Free University and the Theological School in Kampen. Eglinton's biography of Bavinck provides another two (probable) causes of Bavinck' refusal to critique Kuyper publicaly. First, Kuyper's strong personality and self-assurance drove him to outmanoeuvre his opponents and make their life difficult. This can be seen in the public conflict between Kuyper and Alexander de Savornin Lohman (1837-1924), who was one of Kuyper's most important collaborators in founding the Anti-Revolutionary Party (1879) and the Free University. Lohman's disagreement with Kuyper's suggestion of mass democracy and the expansion of voting right resulted in the discharge of Lohman's professorship at the Free University by Kuyper's manipulation, and Lohman's break with the Anti-Revolutionary Party.[71] It is probable that Bavinck was aware that he would become the next Lohman if he criticised Kuyper in public. Second, Bavinck was increasingly aware of the revival of Calvinism so that the Netherlands returned to Christianity, particularly to Calvinism.[72] Indeed, this belief in the re-conversion of the Netherlands to Calvinism was salient in Bavinck's 'The Future of Calvinism' (1894). There, he argued that 'the significance of this revival [the revival of Calvinism] lies in this, that it preserves and protects the Christian religion and the Christian Church *in our country*. *Calvinism is the religion of the Dutch nation*, and he that would take our Calvinism away from us, would rob us of the Christian religion and prepare the way among us for unbelief and revolution.'[73] Thus, Bavinck's public silence means his unwillingness to risk upsetting this re-conversion.

Bavinck nevertheless offered some private critiques of Kuyper in his class according to A. Terpstra's notes on Bavinck's lectures. Concerning the relationship between theology and the other sciences, Bavinck and Kuyper differ primarily in four perspectives. First, Bavinck takes issue with Kuyper's method of figuring out the conceptual relationship between theology as a particular science and science in general. Kuyper begins with the notion of science and moves on to explicate that of theology. Although this method is consistent with Reformed principles, Bavinck casts doubt on Kuyper's method of fitting theology within the notion of science.[74] Hence, Bremmer comments that Bavinck would start from the concept of theology

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[71] Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 200-202.
[72] *Ibid.*, 80, 185-186, 188-189, 193-196.
[73] Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," 14; emphasis added.
[74] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 64; cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 38-39.

and then explain that of science, asking if theology is worthy of the name "science."[75] This sequence is clearly present in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* volume 1.

Second, Bavinck criticises Kuyper for adopting a speculative approach to formulating the concept of science. Bavinck contends that '[Kuyper] does not try to infer the concept of science from the phenomena in human life, which are summarised under the name science, but he tries to lay down it outside the empirical from the idea. One feels that Kuyper reasons in a more Platonic than Aristotelian way.'[76] Kuyper's approach is opposite to Bavinck's claim that science starts from positive experience, as has been noted in previous chapters. Bavinck diagnoses that 'in [Kuyper's] way a concept of science is obtained that is totally abstract and goes beyond reality.'[77] One can perceive that Kuyper's speculative or idealistic approach fits well with his viewpoint of two kinds of science, which is grounded in the Spirit's regenerative work. Hence, Bremmer observes that this point is Bavinck's major criticism of Kuyper.[78]

Third, Bavinck opposes Kuyper's willingness to grant Kant a highly significant place in the rise of scientific theology, for in so doing, Augustine, Athanasius, the church fathers, Thomas Aquinas, and the Reformers are not theologians in a good sense.[79] This is because for Kuyper it was until Kant that *the* criterion of science was laid down, which means the figures before Kant were incapable of working out scientific theologies. Following this, as Bavinck has noted, Kuyper fails to account for 'whether or not the notion of theology differs from, or is subordinated to, or coordinate with the notion of science.'[80] Note that this was Bavinck's private critique of Kuyper in class. In public, he showed apparent sympathy with Kuyper, which can be evidenced by the positive evaluation of Kuyper's appreciation of Kant in *Opleiding en Theologie* (*Education and Theology*) (1896).

This brochure was co-authored by Bavinck, Douwe Klazes Wielenga (1842-1902), Maarten Noordtzij and Petrus Biesterveld. However, Bremmer remarks that 'the style and intention' unveils that the brochure was written by Bavinck.[81] Bavinck and the other authors together argue:

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[75] Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 39.
[76] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 68, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 39-40.
[77] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 79, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 40.
[78] Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 40.
[79] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 102, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 42.
[80] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 105, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 42.
[81] Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en Zijn Tijdgenoten*, 86. This brochure was intended to show a moderate stance on the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates. However, as Bremmer notes, the authors showed great sympathy to Kuyper (89).

> Finally, it is … admitted that the name "theology" in scientific sense really only indicates the so-called dogmatics nowadays. … The other subjects, which were counted into theology, were not yet included in the organism of theology; they were not yet constructed out of one organic theological principle. This has first come to pass in this century since the concept of science is imagined more clearly. In this respect, Kant holds a significant place. *Not materially but formally, much is owed to him and the later German philosophy. Dr. Kuyper certainly means this and nothing else as he says that the science of theology has first come to its full consciousness in this century.* And this can and will be denied by nobody that has make any acquittance with the new philosophy.[82]

This statement seems to employ the principle of the presumption of innocence. Based on the common viewpoint that 'the science of theology has first come to its full consciousness in this century', the authors believe that Kuyper is innocent in this regard because he follows the common stance so as to grant Kant such a highly significant place in the history of scientific theology in a formal rather than material sense. Of course, Bavinck's public endorsement and private critique of Kuyper indicate indelible tensions. A possible explanation is that the other authors might be inclined to favour Kuyper's innocence.

Fourth, Bavinck is critical of Kuyper's view of the relationship between the church and the theological school and the theological faculty, which is grounded in Kuyper's threefold taxonomy of theology.[83] In this regard, Bavinck targets Kuyper's contention that,

> sufficient knowledge of God ad hoc flows from the Holy Scripture in a threefold way: personal, ecclesiastical and scientific. … Distinction meanwhile is readily made between this personal, churchly and scientific theology (or knowledge of God). The first tends to supply each child of God his comfort in life and in death. The second, to enable the Church to preach and to maintain her confession in the face of the world. And the third is charged with the introduction of the knowledge of God into the human consciousness. The first has for its circle the lifesphere of the individual, the second the circle of the institutional church, and the third the circle of the church taken as an organism.[84]

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[82] Herman Bavinck et al., *Opleiding en Theologie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1896), 58. Dutch original: 'Eindelijk is het … bekend, dat de naam Theologie in wetenschappelijken zin eigenlijk alleen aanduidde de thans zoogenaamde Dogmatiek. … De andere vakken, die thans tot de Theologie gerekend worden, waren nog niet in het organisme der Theologie opgenomen; ze werden nog niet van uit één organisch Theologisch beginsel geconstrueerd. Dit is eerst geschied in deze eeuw, sedert het begrip van wetenschap helderder is ingedacht. Kant bekleedt in dit opzicht eene beteekenisvolle plaats. Materieel niet, maar formeel is aan hem en de latere Duitsche wijsbegeerte veel te danken. Dit en niets anders bedoelt voorzeker ook Dr. Kuyper, als hij zegt, dat de wetenschap der Theologie eerst in deze eeuw tot haar volle bewustheid is gekomen. En dat kan en zal door niemand worden ontkend, die met de nieuwere wijsbegeerte ook maar eenige kennis heeft gemaakt.

[83] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 134, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 44.

[84] *EST*, 588, 589-590; *EHG*, 2:543, 544.

By arguing so, Kuyper makes it clear that scientific theology has nothing to do with the institutional church insofar as the scientific knowledge of God that entails scientific theology is not afforded to the institutional church. Instead, the organically visible church is pertinent to scientific theology. As Harinck and Berkelaar observe, 'the responsibility for all science, thus including theology, was not transferred by Kuyper from the government to the Church, but to the Christian community. Thus, the church as an institution had no task in relation to theological science.'[85] Bavinck could not agree with Kuyper on the separation between the institutional church and scientific theology, though they concur that scientific theology should be practised in the university. *Contra* Kuyper, Bavinck argues that scientific theology has been associated with the church from the beginning.[86]

Bavinck's stance is set out in *Opleiding en Theologie*. First of all, Bavinck argues that 'theology is given by Christ to the Church and must originate from the Church, especially the institutional church. There is no theology outside it.'[87] Nonetheless, Bavinck and his co-authors do not align themselves with Lindeboom. Rather, they contend that the intimate bond between theology and the institutional church by no means implies that every member of the institutional church or every ecclesiastical office holder practises scientific theology.[88] Bavinck clarifies that theology's origination from the (institutional) church does not mean the ecclesiastical office as the threshold of theology. He says, 'Here we do not yet discuss the question if [the practice of scientific theology] is also in relation to the office but refute that the practice of theology in the scientific sense as such comes out of and is an essential component of the office.'[89] Interestingly, Bavinck refrains from elaborating on the relationship between theology and the ecclesiastical office. It is probable that he wants to avoid triggering a sharper conflict between Lindeboom and Kuyper as well as with himself. In so doing, moreover, Bavinck differentiates theology in the narrower sense from that in the broader sense.[90] For him, the former refers to scientific theology in the Free University. In any case, theology in the narrower sense, namely scientific theology, is not a churchly activity, as professors in theology are not responsible for taking pastoral care in churches. This does not mean that Bavinck intends to separate scientific theology from the institutional church. On the contrary, he asserts that the institutional church—rather than the ecclesiastical office holder—is responsible for

[85] Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, 113.
[86] Terpstra, *Dictaat*, 134, cited in Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 44.
[87] Bavinck et al., *Opleiding en Theologie*, 47.
[88] *Ibid.*, 47-48.
[89] *Ibid.*, 48.
[90] *Ibid.*

ensuring scientific theology in such a way that the practice of scientific theology is always a highly valued objective of the care of the institutional church.[91] More specifically, Bavinck accentuates that God has endowed the institutional church with a better understanding of the calling to practise scientific theology than the university. On this score, the institutional church should release the gifted practitioners of scientific theology from much churchly labour and offer them much time and opportunities to undertake scientific studies of theology. Thereby, scientific theology is more closely related to the institutional church.[92]

Taking into consideration his public discourse on Kuyper's theological encyclopaedia, Bavinck's private fourfold critique above shows his several basic points. First, Bavinck emphatically affirms the scientificity of theology and the theological legitimacy of the theological faculty of the Free University, though he and Kuyper differ in the notion and method of science somewhat. This point is resonant with Bavinck's insistence on the sovereignty of science. Second, Bavinck holds fast to the fact that scientific theology is closely related to the institutional church, which is deeply rooted in the history of Christianity. Third, as noted in the analysis of 'Souvereiniteit der wetenschap' earlier, Bavinck again accentuates the importance of the human agent (the practitioner of scientific theology), who must be a member of the institutional church and to whom the institutional church should do its best to lend support. As such, the practitioner of scientific theology becomes the junction of the institutional church and the university.

C. Summary

By focusing on the themes of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia, it has been demonstrated that Bavinck's middle way is characterised by the following: (1) that he aligns himself with Kuyper in locating scientific theology in the university and holds fast to the relationship between theology and the other sciences; and (2) that scientific theology cannot be separated from the institutional church due to the fact that the true practitioner of scientific theology must be a member of the institutional church, thus committing himself to a specific ecclesial tradition.

These two points pave the way for our following elaboration on Bavinck's view of the relationship between theology and the other sciences. To Bavinck's mind, this relationship cannot be illustrated (1) without a church-committed theology or (2) with a separatist theology.

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[91] *Ibid.*, 48-49.

[92] *Ibid.*, 49. One can find Bavinck's consistent stance on the church's calling of scientific theology since the early years of his career. This calling has been delineated as concerning the Christian Reformed Church; Bavinck, "De Wetenschappelijke Roeping Onzer Kerk," 88-93, 97-106.

On balance, the practitioner of scientific theology has the responsibility to commit to the church and introduce the knowledge of God to the world for divine glorification.[93] To speak in Gregory's language, theology must be 'the assumed.' Then, as will be demonstrated below, for Bavinck theology should 'heal' the other sciences insofar as 'what is united with God is also being saved.'

IV. Bavinck on Theology as the *Regina Scientiarum*

The Kuyper-Lindeboom debates have attested that for Bavinck the relationship between theology and the other sciences should be understood within the context of the Christian faith. In Bavinck's age, this relationship involved theological education, the union of the Reformed churches and the legitimacy of the Free University (which was Christian and Reformed). Given this, Bavinck's approach to sorting out the issue of this relationship cannot but begin from the theological perspective. By doing so, he took pains to persuade his separatist colleagues (e.g. Lindeboom) to do justice to the other sciences and engage in the general Dutch academia.

Bavinck's appropriation of the Medieval slogan "theology as the *Regina Scientiarum*" epitomises his theological account of the interaction between theology and the other sciences. Unlike the Medieval ethos that theology is the Queen and the other sciences are the handmaiden, Bavinck maintains that theology is the humble Queen and the servant of the other sciences. This innovative appropriation of the Medieval slogan is embodied in Bavinck's Christological and eschatological description of theology's Queenship.

A. The Logos-Christological Account

Having argued that theology must be connected to the other sciences, Bavinck clarifies that '[i]t only befits [theology] as *Regina*, like Christ the King, to rule and win over with moral and spiritual weapons.'[94] The terms "moral" and "spiritual" are so fascinating that one would dismiss the further inquiry into why Bavinck adopts a Christological account of theology's Queenship and relationship with the other sciences. Indeed, the statement above is reflective of Christ's identity of Redeemer. However, a proper understanding of Bavinck's Christological account cannot dismiss the identity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Creator. 'It is the Father who, through the Son as Logos, imparts himself to his creatures in the Spirit.'[95]

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[93] See chapter 5, II-III.
[94] *WHG*, 34-35.
[95] *RD*, 1:214; also see 1:336; 4:33.

Bavinck explains that the Son's identity as Creator and Re-Creator consists in the truth that 'He is not only the mediator of re-creation but also of creation.'[96] More specifically, Bavinck contends that,

> the world was surely not eternal but its idea was yet eternally in the mind of God. The Father expresses all his thoughts and his entire being in the one personal Word, and thus the idea of the world is contained in the Logos … In Him the Father contemplates the idea of the world itself, not as though it were identical with the Son, but so that He envisions and meets it in the Son in whom His perfect fullness dwells. Contained in the divine wisdom, as a part and in sum, lies also the private wisdom that will be realized in the creatures. He is the Logos by whom the Father creates all things.[97]

This statement on creation is not merely Logosological but also, fundamentally, Trinitarian. 'The creation thus proceeds from the Father through the Son in the Spirit in order that, in the Spirit and through the Son, it may return to the Father.'[98] Moreover, given God's creation by the Logos, all things are knowable insofar as they were first thought by God.[99] On this score, we can draw the corollary, as Brian Mattson has pointed out, that Bavinck's 'Trinitarian creational ontology is … the external foundation for all science, not just theology.'[100]

The nature of the external foundation embodies in Bavinck's statement that '[s]cience always consists in a logical relation between subject and object.'[101] As has been argued earlier, the organic correspondence between subjective and objective revelation that is established by the Logos is characteristic of scientific theology.[102] Likewise, the Logos created such correspondence for all science.

> That subject and object so meet and agree with each other is grounded in the fact that both originate with the same God—a God who created the reality outside of us, who created the laws of thinking in us, and who placed these in an organic relation to each other. As a compendium of nature, man is designed for and related to the whole world. ... It is one Logos that created both man and world in relation to each other and for each other. It is in that same Logos that all things have their existence.[103]

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[96] *RD*, 2:423; *GD*, 2:387.
[97] *GD*, 2:388-389; *RD*, 2:425; rev.
[98] *RD*, 2:426; *GD*, 2:389.
[99] *CWB*, 27-28; *CWV*, 45.
[100] Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 56.
[101] *RD*, 1:214; *GD*, 1:186.
[102] Chapter 4, IV.A.
[103] Bavinck, "Foundations of Psychology," 116-117; also see Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 110. *RD*, 1:231. By arguing for the role that the Logos plays in the correspondence between the subject and object of science, Bavinck refrains from the René Descartes' dualism that the human being is the subject of science and the world is the object; cf. Klapwijk, "Abraham Kuyper on Science, Theology and University," 24-26.

This cogently rebuts K. Scott Oliphint's observation on Bavinck that 'the Logos principle *just is* the knowledge of God, through the Logos, that all men, by virtue of their being created, necessarily and for eternity, *have*.'[104] Bavinck's theology of the Logos is first of all concerned with ontology rather than epistemology; hence, Oliphint does injustice to qualify the Logos principle as epistemological alone. For Bavinck, the Logos provides the ontological foundation of the unity of creation. This Logos-based ontology is in tune with Ian McFarland's appropriation of Maximus the Confessor's theology to elaborate on the unity of creation. McFarland contends:

> The creation is a whole insofar as, to use Maximus's analogy, it serves as the temporal clothing of God's eternal Word. Here its unity is not conceived … in terms of the certain characteristics shared by all creatures, but rather by reference to the Word, in relation to whom the creation acquires its shape as a garment, and apart from whom its true form cannot be perceived.[105]

Both Bavinck and McFarland ground human cognitive activities in the Logos-based ontology. Furthermore, Bavinck's realism enhances the priority of ontology over epistemology.

> Realism … was doubtlessly correct in assuming the reality of universal concepts, not in a Platonic or ontological sense prior to the thing itself (*ante rem*), but in an Aristotelian sense *in the thing itself* (*in re*) and therefore also in the human mind subsequent to *the thing itself* (*in mente hominis post rem*). *The universality we express in a concept does not exist as such, as a universal, apart from us.* In every specimen of a genus, particularly individualized and specialized, however, it has *its basis in things* and is abstracted from it and expressed in a concept by the activity of the intellect.[106]

The language of the statement, "the thing itself" and "basis in things", points to the priority of ontology over epistemology in Bavinck's general realism. Hence, he stresses the third aspect of the notion of science that 'the science is … bound to that object as rigorously as possible.'[107] Following this, it could be inferred that the variegated natures of various sciences have been created *via* the Logos. As such, the other sciences cannot epistemologically be reduced to theology (the science of God) that is pertinent to the knowledge of God and divine things.

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[104] Oliphint, "Bavinck's Realism, the Logos Principle, and *Sola Scriptura*," 387.
[105] Ian A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 83. It is also interesting to observe that McFarland explicates the diversity and unity of creatures in detail, which, though he makes no reference to Bavinck's works, is similar to Bavinck's view of creation as organism (67-83).
[106] *RD*, 1:231; emphasis added. On Bavinck's realism in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense, see David S. Sytsma, "Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology: The Argument and Sources of his Principia of Science," in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology*, ed. John Bolt (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011), 1-56.
[107] *RD*, 1:90; a similar statement can be found in Bavinck's inaugural address at the Free University; Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 86; also see earlier analysis in chapter 3, II.B.

Based on this Logosological foundation, the theology of the Logos is of considerable importance to science: 'The "logos" implicit in creatures corresponds to the "logos" in human beings and makes science possible.'[108]

The analysis hitherto logically shows that the Logos provides the ontological foundation on which the unity of theology and the other sciences is constituted. This observation is consistent with Bavinck's view of the organic unity of science: 'There was the whole before parts, and the members of the organism of science are gradually developed and grown from the whole.'[109] Hence, 'the dualism and duality' of theology and the other sciences 'comes to a deep unity' in the Creator-Logos as Mediator.[110] In this light, Sutanto's observation needs to be strengthened by the Logos-based ontology: 'Beneath the distinctions and particularities of each field of knowledge is a [Logosologically ontologically] harmonious view of the whole.'[111]

Bavinck Logos-Christological account of science mirrors the Logosology in a wider neo-Calvinism. Although Kuyper set forth his theology of the Logos in *Encyclopaedia* in 1894, Bavinck's colleague at the Free University Jan Woltjer (1849-1917) was more influential in this regard. As a neo-Calvinist philosopher, his 'De Wetenschap van den Logos' (1891) (The Science of the Logos) came out three years earlier than Kuyper's *Encyclopaedia*. Robert Arnoldus Nijhoff's recent study shows that central to Woltjer's philosophy are the terms "logos" and "Logos", whereby Woltjer repudiates absolute idealism (e.g. Berkeley's philosophy) and articulates a form of idealism in order to explicate the relationship between the spiritual and the material.[112] Needless to say, Woltjer's Logosology should impinge on Bavinck's Logos-Christological account of science.

Woltjer argues that '[t]he Logos, the Word, which was with God in the beginning, through which all things are made, is purely mirrored in the logos of human beings to a creaturely degree. Only the logos knows the Logos.'[113] Woltjer makes it clear that the human logos

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[108] *RD*, 1:279; *GD*, 1:253.
[109] *CW*, 59.
[110] Cf. Veenhof, "Revelation and Grace in Herman Bavinck," 12.
[111] Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 51. This ontological implication of the organic unity of science is corrective to his later argument that the unity of the sciences owes to 'the principles of Christian-theism—*wetenschap* conforms to an organic shape of unity-in-diversity such that the *principia* of theology (Scriptural revelation and the doctrinal content of faith) remain the *principia* of the other sciences in *addition* to their own individual *principia*' (60).
[112] Robert Arnoldus Nijhoff, "De logosfilosofie van Jan Woltjer (1849-1917): Logos en wijsbegeerte aan de vroege Vrije Universiteit" (PhD proefschrift, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2014), 16-20.
[113] Jan Woltjer, "De Wetenschap van den Logos (1891)," in *Verzamelde Redevoeringen en Verhandelingen* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1931), 24. Dutch original: 'In den logos van den mensch spiegelde, in creatuurlijke mate, zich zuiver af de Logos, het Woord, dat in den beginne was bij God, door hetwelk alle dingen gemaakt zijn. De logos alleen kent den Logos'

implies the human cognitive capacity, which is essential to every science. Hence, he describes each science as the science of the logos, that is, as the inquiry into what the Logos reveals in human life and the cosmos.[114] On his Logosology, Woltjer contends:

> Since the human logos is a part, if you would prefer, an organ or a function of the soul, and the soul, according to the customary used expression, dwells in the body and this body is a part of cosmos, it is naturally that these sciences of the logos have their border region, where they come into touch and intercourse with other objects of knowing. To my way of thinking, however, its own field is so fixed with sufficient certainty, and the bond, which connects them mutually as a whole, is indicated clearly.[115]

To read Bavinck's argument along with Woltjer's, it is perceptible that the two neo-Calvinist thinkers ground the unity of science in the work of the Logos internally in the human being and externally in the cosmos.

It is on the basis of this Logos-based organic unity of science that Bavinck furnishes his Christological account of theology's Queenship. We should concede that the Logosological account of theology as the Queen is not straightforwardly delineated and explicated in Bavinck's works. Nevertheless, this Logos-Christological hallmark is implied and central, which can be deduced affirmatively for two reasons. First, as has been demonstrated in length above, the Logos affords the ontological foundation of the organic unity of science, which shapes the territory of the Queen. Second, we need to recall the revelationalism which is central to Bavinck's scientific theology. Theology is grounded in God's revelation, the centre and culmination of which is in Jesus Christ, the Logos, who 'is the *principium cognoscendi*, in a general sense of all science, in a special sense, as *Logos asarkos*, of all knowledge of God, of religion and theology.'[116]

The second point demonstrates that due to the bond between theology and the other sciences, the Logos establishes and sustains the Queenship of theology. In a special sense, the *Logos asarkos* enables theology alone to have God as its unique object. Hence, Bavinck maintains that 'in the circle of the sciences, theology is entitled to the place of honour, not

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[114] *Ibid.*, 18.
[115] *Ibid.*, 19. Dutch original: 'Daar de menschelijke logos een deel, of wilt ge liever, een orgaan of eene functie is van de ziel en de ziel, naar de door het gebruik geijkte uitdrukking, woont in het lichaam en dit lichaam een deel is van den kosmos, is het natuurlijk dat deze wetenschappen van den logos hun grensgebied hebben, waar ze in aanraking komen en gemeenschap hebben met andere voorwerpen van het weten. Haar eigen gebied is echter, mijns inziens, aldus met voldoende zekerheid bepaald en de band, die ze onderling tot een geheel verbindt, is duidelijk aangewezen.'
[116] *GD*, 1:372; *RD*, 1:402; rev.

because of the persons who practice it, but because of the object with which it is preoccupied; it is and remains—provided it is understood in a proper sense—the Queen of the sciences.'[117]

Whilst arguing that God as its defining-object is determinative for theology as the Queen, Bavinck deploys the notion of Queenship to the differentiation between theology and the other sciences. He contends:

> [Theology] is *the* science, "the Queen of the sciences" (*Regina Scientiarum*). It stands highly above all sciences. For all these sciences only have a special field of creation as the object of their research. They make themselves preoccupied with the cosmos of the human beings, and thus associate all things with creatures. However, our science leaves them far behind itself, directing the eye of the creation to the Creator. Born from God, it has Him as the object. Just as other sciences have only one principle, so it also has only one, distinct and identifiable object, which is nothing other than God Himself, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and claims the honour of theology in the circle of sciences.[118]

Bavinck makes it clear that by having God as its unique object, theology differentiates itself from the other sciences in the circle of sciences. However, this particularity should be read together with the doctrine of creation. From the vantage point of God as the Creator and Sustainer, Bavinck asserts that all science is characterised as theological on the ground that all science is the inquiry into the created life and the cosmos and thus has its root in God Himself.[119]

It is in this context that Bavinck argues that theology should imitate Christ to rule over the other sciences spiritually and morally.[120] This gives rise to the question: How is theology's spiritual and moral dominion actualised? Clearly, the block quote above has shown that the spiritual and moral reign is embodied in theology's directing the other sciences to the Creator. Nonetheless, Bavinck is meticulous in explicating theology's Queenship in reminding us of the differing roles of theology and Scripture. In the booklet that sets forth his proposal of the union of the Theological School in Kampen and the theological faculty of the Free University, while defending the independence of each science, Bavinck asserts that 'Scripture but not theology

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[117] *GD*, 1:31; *RD*, 1:54; rev; also see *CW*, 99-100.
[118] *WHG*, 33-34. Dutch original: 'Zij is *de* wetenschap, »Regina scientiarum." Hoog staat zij boven alle wetenschappen. Want deze allen hebben slechts een speciaal gebied der schepping tot voorwerp van haar onderzoek. Zij houden zich alle bezig met den kosmos of den anthropos, en verkeeren dus alle omtrent het schepsel. Maar deze onze wetenschap laat ze verre achter zich, vestigt van het schepsel af op den Schepper het oog. Uit God geboren, heeft zij ook Hem zelven tot voorwerp. Evenals ze naast andere wetenschappen een eigen beginsel had, zoo heeft zij ook een eigen, duidelijk aanwijsbaar object, dat, daar het niets anders is dan God zelf, de Schepper en Onderhouder aller dingen, der Theologie aanspraak geeft op de eereplaats in den kring der wetenschappen.'
[119] *WHG*, 35.
[120] *WHG*, 34-35.

is the lamp for the foot of the other sciences. Theology has no right to prescribe the laws for the other, nor to rule over its sisters like a Queen.'[121] On this score, it could be argued that Bavinck locates theology's Queenship in its mediating Holy Scripture to the other sciences in terms of spirituality and morality. This mediation becomes vivid in Bavinck's eschatological account of theology as the *Regina scientiarum*.

B. The Eschatological Account

Bavinck's eschatological account of theology's Queenship must follow the Logos-Christological account. On the one hand, given the priority of Bavinck's Trinitarian ontology, the latter lays the ontological foundation that makes possible the progress and development of all science towards the eschaton. On the other hand, the theological implication of the eschatological character of theology's Queenship is rooted in Jesus Christ insofar as theology mediates Holy Scripture, which bears witness to the incarnate Logos, to the other sciences.

In *De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (1883), Bavinck elaborates explicitly on the eschatological idiosyncrasy of theology's Queenship. First of all, as has been demonstrated earlier, he argues that the scientificity and excellence of theology is mirrored in its dedication to the interpretation of the Word of God (the Logos) in order to find out what is hidden in Holy Scripture.[122] Immediately following this argument, Bavinck offers a lengthy eschatological account of theology's Queenship.

> Also in the goal that theology pursues, [theology's] excellence surpasses the other sciences. As the principles and objects of differing sciences are lied in the creature, so are their standing point and goal. They have their destiny on this earth: they move within the finite; they do not go beyond time. However, theology, striving for far above all these particular ends, finds its end and standing point first in God. But so it should also be the Queen, leading all the particular ends towards and also finding their ultimate and highest end in Him, from whom and to whom all things are, for whose glorification everything must serve. The Queen that is also the prophetess points to a glorious prospect and the jubilee of a blessed future, to which it looks forward with full hope and desire. … Once [theology] leads all those who cherish it onto the glorious terrain, … [e]very distinction between the sacred and the profane, between the Church and the world is then cancelled. Now, this distinction must be preserved, and towards the other sciences theology is still bounded and well defined. Then, however, the ranking struggle of faculties has an end. There are no separate, no sacred and profane sciences anymore. Then, there is

[121] Bavinck, *Het Recht der Kerken en de Vrijheid der Wetenschap*, 19. Dutch original: 'De Schrift is de lamp voor den voet der overige wetenschappen, maar niet de Theologie. Deze heeft geen recht, aan gene de wetten voor te schrijven noch om als eene Koningin over haar zusteren te heerschen.' By arguing so, Bavinck rejects the saying that 'theology is the Queen, the lamp for the foot of the other sciences' (17).
[122] Chapter 4, IV.B.

> only one holy, glorious science that is theology: knowing all things in God and of God in all things.[123]

Three observations can be made here. First, the Queenship means that theology reminds the other sciences, which have finite goals, of the infinite goal that the end of science is in God. This gives rise to the question: How can theology share its infinite goal with the other sciences? The answer to this question is based on Bavinck's conception of the organic unity of science. He avers elsewhere:

> All science is one … and science searches for the principle and the system that connects and supports all things. … Even those specialty sciences search for the principle and the system that must lie at the foundation of those special kinds of phenomena as well. They attempt, as it were, to uncover the basic idea, the life force of those phenomena, in order from that point of view to describe and illuminate everything belonging to a particular field, in order to know each thing not only in itself but also—and this too is required for genuine science in the light of, and in connection with, and from the standpoint of, the whole.[124]

The idea of unity and diversity refers clearly to Bavinck's organicism. Granted that creation is the organic unity that is grounded in the Trinity, all science is one in virtue of the fact that the created things as the investigated objects of sciences are united. The interconnectedness within the organism of science implies the mutual participation of sciences. Given the fourth principle of Bavinck's organicism that the organism develops towards its own definite *telos*, the members of the organism of science participate into one goal that is the definite *telos* of the whole organism, that is, the doxological *telos* according to God's revelation in Holy Scripture.[125] In this light, the other sciences participate in their Queen's *telos*. Theology is

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[123] *WHG*, 48-49. Dutch original: 'Ook in het doel, dat de Theologie najaagt, komt hare voortreffelijkheid boven andere wetenschappen uit. Evenals de beginselen en de objecten der verschillende wetenschappen gelegen zijn in het schepsel, zoo ook haar rustpunt en doel. Zij hebben hare bestemming op aarde: zij bewegen zich binnen het eindige; boven den tijd gaan zij niet uit. Maar de Theologie, over al die bijzondere doeleinden verre heenstrevend, vindt haar einddoel en rustpunt eerst in God. Maar zoo zij ze dan hier ook "Regina," al die bijzondere doeleinden heenleidend tot en ook hun laatste en hoogste doel doende vinden in Hem, uit wien en tot wien alle dingen zijn, tot wiens verheerlijking alles moet dienen. Koningin, is zij dan tevens profetes, heenwijzend naar een heerlijk verschiet en jubelend van eene zalige toekomst, die ze vol hope en verlangen tegemoet ziet. … Eens leidt zij allen die haar liefhebben, binnen in die heerlijke gewesten, … Elk onderscheid van gewijd en profaan, van gemeente en wereld is dan vervallen. Nu moet dat onderscheid gehandhaafd, en ook de Theologie tegenover andere wetenschappen nog begrensd en afgebakend worden. Dan echter neemt de rangstrijd der faculteiten een einde. Er zijn geen afzonderlijke, geen gewijde en profane wetenschappen meer. Er is dan slechts ééne heilige, heerlijke wetenschap, welke is de Theologie: kennen aller dingen in God en van God in alle dingen.'

[124] *PCDS*, 93.

[125] Chapter 5, III.

established as 'a mystical vision' and 'intensifies and concentrates the movement of knowing in which all the sciences share.'[126]

The second aspect of the eschatological idiosyncrasy of theology's Queenship indicates that theology's reminder does not end until the eschaton. Bavinck's comparison between "Now" and "Then" in the quotation above shows that the Queen's reminder is something that continues to be practised until its completion at the eschaton. This is because 'knowing all things in God and of God in all things' cannot be actualised in the temporal world. By arguing such, Bavinck seems to echo Isaiah's description of the eschatological image on the Lord's holy mountain: 'for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea' (Isaiah 11:9; NRSV). On the other hand, to contrast "Now" with "Then" unveils the fact that we can have a glance into what the other sciences ultimately hope for and will finally come to pass at the eschaton. As such, Wolter Huttinga puts it well: '[Theology] should be called the eschatology or *telos* of the sciences. Science, realizing itself in the deepest and fulfilled sense, becomes theology.'[127] This also explains why Bavinck argues that 'there is only one holy, glorious science that is theology' at the eschaton. By doing so, Bavinck maintains a critical distance from Kuyper's view of two kinds of science—the regenerate and the unregenerate—which, borrowing Gordon Graham's language, 'implies some sort of academic apartheid.'[128] Furthermore, theology's continuing reminder strengthens its affinity with the other sciences. In this regard, Bavinck's discourse is moving: 'Theology is not the enemy of any one science. In its independence, it recognises and honours them all, and gratefully makes use of them for its own development, and with sisterly affection, it wants to be a blessing to them all.'[129]

Third, in approaching the eschaton, theology is responsible for *serving the progression* of all science towards the infinite glorious goal. In the block quote above, Bavinck adds that theology's Queenship needs to be qualified by the identity of theology as the prophetess that 'points to a glorious prospect and the jubilee of a blessed future' for the other sciences that are moving within the finite. To speak in the organic language, *the organism of science can continue to develop and expand towards the proper eschatological goal only under the guidance of theology*.

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[126] Wolter Huttinga, "'Marie Antoinette' or Mystical Depth?: Herman Bavinck on Theology as Queen of the Sciences," in *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution*, ed. James Eglinton and George Harinck (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 154.
[127] *Ibid.*, 147.
[128] Gordon Graham, "Abraham Kuyper and the Idea of a Christian Scholar," in *Church and Academy*, ed. Gordon Graham, The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 140.
[129] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 126.

If we read the third point along with Bavinck's *De algemeene genade* (Common Grace) (1894), it can be seen that theology's Queenship serves as part of God's common grace. Bavinck insists that, due to divine love and compassion, common grace is bestowed to restrain sin and sustain good. 'All that is good and true has its origin in this grace, including the good we see in fallen man. … The spirit of God makes its home and works in all the creation. … The arts and sciences are good, useful, and of great value.'[130] On the one hand, the progression of all science is sustained by God's common grace. On the other hand, we discern that in the *locus* of common grace that science is married with the operation of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Bavinck's view has already taken the root in his Trinitarian creational ontology. He also argues elsewhere that 'an operation of God's Spirit and of his common grace is discernible … in science.'[131] In this sense, theology's Queenship is destined by the Triune God and actualised by the Spirit's operation as a component of common grace.

Combined with the Logos-Christological account of theology's Queenship, Bavinck forms a Spirit-Logos model—which is also present in Bavinck's articulation of *organically* critical realism—to justify theology's service to the progression of all science towards the aforementioned glorious goal.[132] The Holy Spirit is the driving force of the organism of science as that of organically scientific theology. For Bavinck, as has been demonstrated, *theology* as a science is the work of the Triune God who grants the theologian special grace; meanwhile, theology as a *science* cannot dispense with the operation of the Spirit in the world by common grace. Hence, theology's Queenship embodies in its service of leading the other sciences into divine grace until the eschaton. As Bavinck contends in the elaboration on the theology of common grace,

> Theology's honor is not that she sits enthroned above them as *Regina scientiarum* [Queen of the sciences] and waves her scepter over them but that she is permitted to serve them all with her gifts. Theology also can rule only by serving. She is strong when she is weak; she is greatest when she seeks to be least. She can be glorious when she seeks to know nothing save Christ and him crucified. Theology is ultimately nothing other than [the] interpretation of the *gratia Dei* [grace of God] in the arena of science.[133]

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[130] Bavinck, "Common Grace," 51. The correlation between common grace and science is a significant theme in Kuyper's system; see Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, 33-104.
[131] *RD*, 1:319; *GD*, 1:291.
[132] Chapter 4, IV.A. This Spirit-Logos model can also be found in Woltjer, "De Wetenschap van den Logos (1891)," 28-30.
[133] Bavinck, "Common Grace," 65.

C. Summary

While arguing for theology as the Queen of the sciences, Bavinck takes a differing approach to that of the Medieval Christianity. Rather than considering the other sciences as handmaidens, Bavinck argues that theology should cherish them as its sisters. According to him, this innovative idea of theology as the Queen of the sciences is characterised as Logos-Christological, and eschatological. These two hallmarks are correlative in such a way that the eschatological is the extension of and supplement to the Logos-Christological. The latter lays the ontological foundation of the organic unity of science by virtue of the fact that Bavinck's Trinitarian creational ontology determines the priority of ontology over epistemology. Other than the ontological significance, the Logos-Christological idiosyncrasy is indicative of theology's spiritual and moral reign over the other sciences, which is embodied in the threefold aspect of the eschatological peculiarity of theology's Queenship that is essentially related to its commitment to the interpretation of the word of God. Therefore, Bavinck's articulation of the relationship between theology and the other sciences is fundamentally Christological.

By the idea of Queenship, Bavinck delineates a kingdom of science, in which the Queen leads the other sciences to achieve divine glorification by mediating Holy Scripture to them. In this sense, to speak in Gregory's language, theology must be 'the assumed' in order to gain 'the healed.' That is, inasmuch as the other sciences are united with theology, they are saved in the sense that they attain their ultimate and infinite foundation. 'And for that reason theology and dogmatics do not belong … in a church seminary, but in the university of the sciences (*universitas scientiarum*).'[134]

It is worth noting that the affinity of theology and the other sciences, which is established by theology's Queenship, cannot get rid of the vitality of the practitioner of science. As has been demonstrated earlier, Bavinck's ideas of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia manifest his emphasis on the human agent in scientific activities. In this light, the practitioner of scientific theology is indispensable to the Queen as it mediates Holy Scripture to the other sciences. Otherwise, human ontology would be subject to scientific epistemology insofar as the mediation of Holy Scripture to the other sciences has nothing to do with the *being* of humans. On this score, Sutanto seems ambiguous in arguing that 'the

[134] *RD*, 1:54; *GD*, 1:31. It is worth noting that this saying was added to the second edition of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. This addition was probably due to the fact that Bavinck has moved to the Free University of Amsterdam. While the first edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* was completed, Bavinck was seeking painstakingly for the union of the two theological institutions. To say that theology and dogmatics do not belong to a seminary would eradicate the possibility of the union.

principia of all of the sciences are found in Scripture and its content.'[135] He finds supportive words in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*: 'Scripture has much to say also to the other sciences. It is a light on our path and a lamp for our feet, also with respect to science and art. … At every moment science and art come into contact with Scripture; the primary principles [*principia*] for all of life are given us in Scripture.'[136] However, Sutanto does not explain how the *principia* in Scripture are *given* to human beings. In this regard, Bavinck's disagreement with Kuyper in the notion of sphere sovereignty—that is, Bavinck's emphasis on the human agent's obedience to the sovereignty of science—can be used to fill in Sutanto's omission. That is, these *principia* are *mediated* to the life of science via the agency of the practitioner of science.[137] This point of view fits in well with the immediate context of Sutanto's quotation in *Reformed Dogmatics*. In the paragraphs after this quotation, Bavinck explicitly relates the *given principia* to the *being* of humans. Having demonstrated that Jesus Christ came not for science but for *saving human beings*, Bavinck contends:

> [Scripture] too is religious through and through, the word of God unto salvation, but for that very reason a word for family and society, for science and art. Scripture is a book for the whole of humankind in all its ranks and classes, in all its generations and peoples. But for that very reason too it is not a scientific book in the strict sense. Wisdom, not learning, speaks in it. It does not speak the exact language of science and the academy but the language of observation and daily life.[138]

Accordingly, Bavinck's stance is that grounded in the salvation of Jesus Christ, the *principia* of Scripture for science were given through the *being* of the scientific theologian, which has been transformed by the religious Scripture. Following this, the affinity between Bavinck's middle way between Kuyper and Lindeboom and Bavinck's view of theology's Queenship comes to the fore under the auspices of Jesus Christ. They together show that a scientific theologian who is transformed by God's grace in Jesus Christ is enthusiastic about interpreting the grace of God in the arena of science. They together show that a genuine scientific theologian cannot be a separatist due to the belief that his mediation of the *principia* of Scripture to the other sciences will finally lead them to behold God's glory in eternity. By doing so, the spiritual

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[135] Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 65.
[136] *RD*, 1:445; *GD*, 1:416; Sutanto's quotation is much longer, see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 65-66.
[137] Indeed, Sutanto perceives the correlation between ontology and epistemology in Bavinck's system; see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 100. However, he seems not to pay close heed to the priority of ontology over epistemology in his doctoral thesis.
[138] *RD*, 1:445; *GD*, 1:417.

and moral reign of the Queen is concretised in the scientific theologian's life that engages in the other sciences.

V. Conclusion

The Kuyper-Lindeboom debates on the ideas of sphere sovereignty and theological encyclopaedia shed light on the context wherein Bavinck's belief that theology must be related to the other sciences was shaped. Granted that Bavinck sought intentionally to protect the union of the Reformed churches achieved in 1892 from these serious debates, his *via media* is not merely contextually determined but also rooted in his scientific theology. The previous chapters have painstakingly demonstrated that Bavinck by no means thinks of scientific theology as insular. The grammar of scientific theology manifests its responsibility to reach out. In this light, the meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's thought through the lens of scientific theology is embedded with a public hallmark. That is, the meta-paradigm of scientific theology is inevitable to deal with theology's engagement with the other sciences and theology's place in the academy.

Like Kuyper, Bavinck holds fast to the sovereignty of science and theological encyclopaedia, to the extent that Lindeboom's separatist stance is repudiated in their arguments. However, unlike Kuyper, Bavinck stresses the connection between the institutional church and scientific theology for the sake of the role that the theologian plays in the practice of scientific theology. Taken together, these two facets mean that, in Gregory's language, theology must be 'the assumed', that is, being related to the institutional church but existing in the academy.

With Bavinck's middle way in mind, it can be argued that "the assumed is the healed" is characteristic of Bavinck's notion of theology as the Queen of the sciences. Theology's Queenship is first Logos-Christological and then eschatological. Like the servant Christ's spiritual and moral dominion, theology is the Queen that serves to lead the other sciences *via* the agency of the scientific theologian to go beyond the finite to attain divine glorification. As the servant, the Queen needs to be *incarnate* in the circle of science, as Christ the King was and continues to be incarnate among humans who need to be healed. Since what is united with God is being saved, the science that is united with theology is being healed and led to the glorious eschaton.

This chapter has shown and explicated Bavinck's Christological approach to articulating the relationship between theology and the other sciences. However, due to the focus on theology's Queenship *per se* in Bavinck's own context, it does not explore whether scientific theology can be relevant in the current day. Therefore, the following chapter will explore a

Bavinckian way to practise scientific theology in the contemporary university in view of theology as the Queen of the sciences.

Chapter 7 A Bavinckian Approach to Scientific Theology in the University of the Twenty-First Century

> Once [theology] leads all those that cherish it into the glorious territory, … there is only one holy, glorious science that is theology: knowing all things in God and of God in all things.[1]
>
> Herman Bavinck

I. Introduction

In the previous chapters, we have explored Bavinck's notion of theology as the *wetenschap* of God, following which an attempt was made to work out the singular Trinitarian grammar of Bavinck's scientific theology. Thereby, the meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system through the lens of scientific theology has been constructed. By doing so, we have seen the emergence of Bavinck's view of the identity of the Trinitarian theologian who elaborates on the scientific nature of theology in the modern world. This system of scientific theology unavoidably has to wrestle with the challenges both to the place of theology in the university and to the affinity between theology and the institutional church. Chapter 6 has analysed Bavinck's stance on where theology belongs in view of his immediate contextual issues (the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates). As has been stated at the outset, this study leads to a relevant promise, that is, appropriating Bavinck's thinking to benefit the contemporary theological agenda. This chapter is intended to deploy Bavinck's theological insights to the articulation of the scientific integrity of theology in the contemporary university. What Bavinck has confronted in the nineteenth century—the attempt to subordinate theology to religious science and natural science—remains the same and even becomes more severe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This chapter's purpose is to respond the contemporary challenge to theology—that is, theology is under the threat of being assimilated into the humanities, social sciences, and religious studies. Moreover, the now commonplace view in support of alleged academic neutrality heightens the challenge in such a way that university theologians are required to ignore their confessional faith when setting about theological studies. Therefore, this chapter seeks to articulate a Bavinckian account of *confessional* scientific theology in the university of the twenty-first century.

Based on the observations made in the previous chapters, this chapter shall put forward three suggestions for the contemporary university theologian. (1) The *wetenschappelijke*

[1] *WHG*, 48-49.

theologian should be humble yet courageous. (2) At root, the question on theology's place in the university should be considered as ontological, more so than epistemological. (3) Bavinck's viewpoint that theology's Queenship is moral and spiritual leads to a corollary that theological ethics can be used as a point of contact between theology and the other sciences. In what follows, I will first take a survey of the history of theology in the university. Then, the three suggestions will be elucidated.

II. The Queen Being Dethroned: A Historical Survey of Theology in the University

Any study on the university cannot ignore the history of the university. This is because what is at issue in the contemporary era does not emerge *ex nihilo*. The potentiality of the emergence of the issues in the university has already come to pass in history. So is the debate on theology's place in the contemporary university.

A. The Honoured Queen

On the matter of the place of theology in the university, relevant historical ressourcement needs to start with the twelfth century, when and after which the first universities (the University of Bologna as the very first) came into existence. The emergence of the university was the consequence of the development of both Medieval education and Christianity. In the course of the shift from the ancient to the medieval world, an adjustment was made on 'classical education principles and existing courses of study', in order to meet the needs of the Medieval church.[2] R. I. Moore's study shows that the Church of the twelfth century encountered serious heretics, for example, Eon de l'Etoile (d. 1150), who destroyed the monasteries in Brittany and laid claim to being the one who came to judge the quick and the dead.[3] It goes beyond the doubt that the defence of doctrinal orthodoxy at the time warranted the development of theological education leaning in a polemical and speculative direction.[4]

Of the first universities, the University of Paris was the most prominent.[5] The prominence of the University was associated with the rise of the city. At the turn of the eleventh century, Paris gained increasing commercial and political status in Europe, which facilitated the

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[2] G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 3. Evans points out another adjustment 'the freemasonry of culture' came to the end (1).
[3] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 23-25.
[4] Spencer E. Young, "Queen of the Faculties: Theology and Theologians at the University pf Paris, c. 1215 0 c. 1250" (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009), 20-22.
[5] Hastings Rashdall pays it a great compliment: 'The University [of Paris], no less than the Roman Church and the feudal Hierarchy headed by the Roman Emperor, represents an attempt to realise in concrete form an ideal of life in one of its aspects.' Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages: Volume 1: Salerno, Bologna, Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

development of local education, drawing a large number of students from other countries who came to study in Paris. The liberal arts became preliminary for the study of theology in the twelfth century. Around the turn of the twelfth century, more than 10% of the Parisian population were students, who could be deemed as a distinct social group. In this sense, the emergence of the university was the consequence of social changes. Specifically, like other social guilds or unions, 'the university developed to protect the collective interest of one group of people against other forces in society.'[6] It should be noted that in the University, there were various communities that consisted of masters and their students. Each student was attracted by and consequently followed one particular master.

With an eye to this thesis, however, what is more noteworthy is that the University of Paris was the first one that established a faculty of theology. The institutionalisation of the University was, however, not yet accomplished until the enaction of the Papal Bull *Parens scientiarum* (1231).[7] This Bull endowed the University of Paris with several significant privileges, whereby the university was entitled to enact its own statutes. This authority promoted the organisation of the faculties of the University. In 1252, the theological faculty as one of the higher faculties had its own right to admit students to the degree of master.[8] Thereby, Paris became the seat and heart of theological studies; the University of Paris took the first and the most important step in shaping theology as an academic discipline. That is to say, the analysis of the theology's position in the contemporary university, which is to practise *wetenschap* (*scientia*), cannot break away from the Medieval origin.

The term "Reformation" connotes the desire to pursue something better. For the Protestant Reformers, this desire ranged over the intellectual, which involved with not only doctrinal purity but also godly learning. This was salient in the Reformed circle. As Yudha Thianto observes, 'Reformed education in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries always took into consideration the integration of the knowledge of the content of the Christian faith and the knowledge of the world surrounding believers.'[9] This intention was intrinsic to the education institutions at the time, albeit the fact that there might be some tensions. For example, in

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[6] Anders Piltz, *The World of Medieval Learning*, trans. David Jones (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 126-128; also see Helene Wieruszowski, *The Medieval University: Masters, Students, Learning* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1966), 27-38.
[7] Further on *Parens scientiarum*, see Ian P. Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University c. 1100-1330* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104-110.
[8] Piltz, *The World of Medieval Learning*, 135-137.
[9] Yudha Thianto, "Reformed Education from Geneva through the Netherlands to the East Indies," in *Church and School in Early Modern Protestantism: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Muller on the Maturation of a Theological Tradition*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, David S. Sytsma, and Jason Zuidema (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 491.

Geneva, the Academy was founded with double task. While Calvin considered that the Academy's principal purpose is to train learned ministers, the Genevans expected to advance the local education in a full-scale way.[10] Notwithstanding these two differing purposes of the Geneva Academy, the Academy indeed improved the local education.[11] This can be evidenced by the career prospects of students at the Geneva Academy from 1591 to 1599, as the table below shows.

Years	Minister/Professor	Civil Service	Lawyer	Noble	Not known
1591	2	1	0	0	0
1592	14	9	1	1	12
1593	7	12	1	6	15
1594	10	11	1	11	11
1595	9	13	0	1	7
1596	19	12	1	2	2
1597	31	28	2	15	0
1598	20	10	2	9	18
1599	24	8	0	3	12

Table 3: Students' later career, 1591-99[12]

The Protestant Reformation's contribution to general education should not overshadow its pastoral purpose. In order to train learned minsters of the future generations, the Protestant churches laid emphasis on the confessional character of education, which was characteristic of Protestant higher education.

If the Medieval age can be seen as the age of faith, indicating that the theology of the time was superior to the other sciences and championed as the Queen of the sciences,[13] the Protestant Reformation still safeguarded the honourable place of theological training in the academy. 'In Reformed and Lutheran territories, older universities were transformed, new universities and academies were created, and while the curricula in the humanities in particular

[10] Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), 9. Hence, Michael Mullett is wrong by saying that the Genevan Academy had 'a single-minded purpose, training ministers for the Reformed Churches, above all for congregations of France.' Michael A. Mullett, *John Calvin* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 213.
[11] For instance, after Theodore Beza (1519-1605) succeeded Calvin's position, the civil authorities make more investment into the Academy so as to promote the teaching of law at the *schola publica*; Maag, *Seminary or University?*, 23-27.
[12] Stelling-Michaud, 1959-1980, *Le Livre du Recteur de l'Académie de Genève*, cited in Maag, *Seminary or University?*, 84. Stelling-Michaud also provides the statistics of medical doctor, merchant/artisan, died young and military.
[13] Chapter one, III.B.a.

followed traditional models, these Protestant institutions did innovate in terms of the academic subjects and practical training considered vital for future pastors.'[14] This observation strongly combats Brad Gregory's provocative claim that the Reformation derived to the secularity of the knowledge in the contemporary Western World.[15] In any case, the Reformation retained the Medieval honour (not hegemony) for theology and meanwhile improved the education of the populace.

B. The Enlightened Humans, the Humiliated Queen

Theology as a *scientia* and its honourable status continued in the post-Reformation era.[16] However, with Kant's concluding observation (*Sapere aude*) on the Enlightenment, the dramatic change of the scientific status of theology was declared to be true.[17] Human courage to use understanding without the guidance from another determines the destiny of theology to be examined under the authority of human reason regardless of the *given* divine revelation.

Kant's *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798) epitomises theology in the university that was under the sway of the Enlightenment. Kant regarded the faculty of theology from a political perspective. He asserted that the three higher faculties (theology, law, medicine) were established for the end of the government.[18] This politically-oriented function of the higher faculties fell short of the freedom of human reason. Viewed as such, the philosophical faculty at the university was necessitated insofar as this lower faculty was genuinely politically independent and exhibits free human reason.

> It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government's own

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[14] Karin Maag, "The Reformation and Higher Education," in *Protestantism after 500 Years*, ed. Thomas Albert Howard and Mark A. Noll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 127-128.
[15] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 299, 304. Another two features of the knowledge in the Western world today are specialisation and segmentation, and 'the separability from the rest of the life.' Goroncy responds potently that the Reformers did not bring about the secularity of knowledge, but cultivated the Christian concern of 'nonecclesial vocations'; Jason Goroncy, "Reformation and Secularity," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 12 (2018): 7.
[16] See chapter 1, III.B.a; also see Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29.
[17] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? (1784)," in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.
[18] Immanuel Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties (1798)," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250.

> detriment); but reason is by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true (no imperative "Believe!" but only a free *credo*).[19]

Following this, Kant criticised the faculty of theology on the grounds that the theologian infused Holy Scripture with the faith of the church, which was grounded 'on laws proceeding from another person's act of choice.' Such a biblical theologian differed from the rational theologian who undertook the exegesis of Scripture according to inner laws embedded in human reason. In this light, the rational theologian infused human reason with religious faith.[20] The difference drawn by Kant between a biblical theologian and a rational theologian was contingent upon his definition of religion: 'for religion is not the sum of certain teachings regarded as divine revelations (that is called theology), but the sum of all our duties regarded as divine *commands* (and, on the subject's part, the maxim of fulfilling them as such).'[21] Therefore, Kant drew a conclusion that philosophy was eligible and legitimate to lay claim to 'the prerogative of deciding [the] meaning' of scriptural texts.[22]

Whilst upholding the faculty of philosophy, Kant came up with a defiant question on the Medieval slogan "theology as the Queen of sciences". 'We can also grant the theology faculty's proud claim that the philosophy faculty is its handmaid,' Kant argued, 'though the question remains, whether the servant *carries her lady's torch before or her train behind*.'[23] Apparently, for Kant, the faculty of philosophy as the handmaid was to carry the torch of theology before. The Queen was humiliated since she was blind to truth. The handmaid needed to hold the torch and walk before the Queen so as to light up the path to truth.

Arguing from the political autonomy to the rational autonomy of the faculty of philosophy, Kant emphasised the attempt to establish philosophy and autonomous inquiry as the governing principle in the university. Applying Kant's rationale broadly, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) stressed that the university as the higher scientific institution could not achieve its purpose unless it held fast to 'the pure idea of *Wissenschaft*', namely that solitude (*Einsamkeit*) and freedom (*Freiheit*) make up of the principles.[24] By arguing so, Humboldt categorically

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[19] *Ibid.*, 249.
[20] *Ibid.*, 262.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*, 264.
[23] *Ibid.*, 255; emphasis original.
[24] Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin," in *Die Idee der deutschen Universität. Die fünf Grundschriften aus der Zeit ihrer Neubegründung durch klassischen Idealismus und romantischen Realismus*, ed. Ernst Anrich (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956), 377. On von Humboldt's view of the faculty of philosophy and his role in the University of Berlin, see Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 151-155; Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 122-124.

took issue with the alleged Queenship of theology, and repudiated any attempt to set scientific inquiry in the bondage of theology.

As with Humboldt, Schleiermacher was not immune to Kant's influence. Thomas Howard puts it well in claiming that, 'Schleiermacher offered the most constructive vision of the theological faculty, traditionalist in some respects, but also intimately tied to the new ethos of *Wissenschaft* and to a regard of the philosophical faculty similar to Kant's.'[25] Schleiermacher laid emphasis on the unity of knowledge as the essence of the university and the idea of *Wissenschaft*.[26] In this united system of knowledge, he afforded philosophy rather than theology the prominent place, thus arguing that the philosophical faculty should be put at the first place in the university.[27] Schleiermacher construed the reason to uphold the prominence of the philosophical faculty as follows:

> Therefore, [the philosophical faculty] is still primary because everyone must recognise and admit its independence that, as soon as one sees over from a particular external relationship, it will not be able to disintegrate and dissolve in diverse dissimilar ways like the [other faculties]. Therefore, it is also primary and actually the Mistress of all others, since all members of the university, to whatever faculties they belong, have to be rooted in [the philosophical faculty] deeply.[28]

Schleiermacher made it clear that the prominence of the philosophical faculty was derived from its function as the sustainer of the independence of scientific inquiry.

It should be conceded that Schleiermacher and his colleagues alike sought to defend the place of theology in the university. Nonetheless, their efforts in essence oppose the honourable place of theology, let alone the Medieval insistence on the Queenship of theology. This idiosyncrasy resonates with the characteristic feature of the general development of the

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[25] Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*, 155.

[26] Friedrich Schleiermacher, "Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn. Nebst einem Anhang über eine neu zu errichtende," in *Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher: Universitätsschriften; Herakleitos; Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums*, ed. Dirk Schmid, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher: Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Abt. 1., Schriften und Entwürfe, vol. 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 35.

[27] *Ibid.*, 55.

[28] *Ibid*., 56. German original: 'Sie ist doch die Erste deshalb, weil Jedermann ihre Selbstständigkeit einsehen und gestehen muß, daß sie nicht wie die übrigen, sobald man von einer bestimmten äußeren Beziehung hinwegsieht, in ein ungleichartiges mannigfaltiges zerfällt und aufgelöst werden kann. Sie ist auch deshalb die Erste und in der That Herrin aller übrigen, weil alle Mitglieder der Universität, zu welcher Facultät sie auch gehören, in ihr müssen eingewurzelt sein.'

This does not mean that, as a prince of the church, Schleiermacher deprived the church of its eligibility to practice theology. As Purvis remarks, '[i]n the modern world, Schleiermacher reckoned, theology had to shift some of its focus from ecclesial traditions to "the spirit of *Wissenschaft*". Yet this shift in orientation was not a turn entirely away from the church, but rather a combining of theology's ecclesial interests with scientific ones.' Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 132-133.

university in the modern world. All disciplines of the university should be practised in the ethos of critical inquiry.[29] By this, the Queen was humiliated by her Enlightened subjects.

C. The Stubborn Queen

It was in the age of the humiliated Queen that Bavinck diligently constructed his scientific theology. If we attempt to appropriate Bavinck's thought to work out a Bavinckian way to defend the scientificity of theology in the contemporary university, the status quo of the humiliated Queen in the contemporary world should be taken into account. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Queen is not merely humiliated. Rather, she is stubborn in that numerous theologians strive to make out a case for its legitimacy in the university in confrontation with the challenges of other disciplines.

One recent defence of theology's place in the university comes from Denys Turner. His intention is to illustrate how theology should be practised in the university in view of the challenges of religious studies. Turner's argument is registered on the basis of two rationales. First, theology can be undertaken provided that the scholar has 'credally and Ecclesially interested spirit.'[30] Second, religious studies refers to 'a theoretical discipline with no existence outside places of learning, a discipline defined not so much by its method as by its object—the religions of the world.'[31]

With these two principles in mind, Turner moves on to elaborate on the difference between theology and religion. He argues that inasmuch as theology is the study of God ('how to talk about God' and 'how God talks'), it cannot be restrained by 'subject-neutral terms' but makes use of 'subject-specific terms.'[32] By contrast, as 'the theorised object', religion is something that we can study.[33] In this regard, Turner casts religious studies into doubt due to the vagueness of its criteria and scope, namely, the shortage of a standard conception of religion.[34] This means that the object in religious studies is not clear and even obscure.

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[29] As Howard remarks, 'the development of Protestant university theology from an apologetic, praxis-oriented, confessional enterprise in the post-Reformation period to one increasingly 'liberal', expressive of the ethos of modern critical knowledge, or *Wissenschaft*.' Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University*, 7.

[30] Denys Turner, "Doing Theology in the University," in *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for Twenty-First Century*, ed. David F. Ford, Ben Quash, and Janet Martin Soskice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

[31] *Ibid.*, 25.

[32] *Ibid.*, 26, 28.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, 28-30. Turner recognises that to describe some commonalities of various religions is of significance to religious studies. However, he judges that such a methodology fails to entail a standard definition of religion.

Turner's comparison underscores God as the specific object of theology. This means that theology is more eligible to be practised in the university than religious studies. This claim relies upon Turner's idea of university. He contends that

> universities ought to be still what they were in their medieval origins, places of disputation, and that whatever else they do, it is their business to do it by means of argument. In which case, the quality of the work they do will consist, still today as then, in the quality of the questions they ask and in the general strategy of calling every answer back to the question it is an answer to, and so to the possibility of rival answers. And that precisely is the reason why any university should want to have in its midst the presence of theologians: for the 'Religious Studies' people ask only the same old sorts of questions that anthropologists, or psychologists, or historians, or sociologists ask, as it happens about religions, whatever we decide they are.[35]

In this light, Turner justifies the place of theology in the university on the ground that theology is more eligible in disputation and argument than religious studies due to theology's specific object—God. Therefore, he uses 'the family of theologians' as the referent of university theologians: 'it is the kinship of those who occupy the common territory of theological *disagreement*, of those who know *how to disagree about God*.'[36]

Turner's strategy of argumentation is astute. He recognises the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in many universities. If religious studies legitimately occupies a position in the university, theology that is more competent in disputation accords much more with the spirit of the university. Consequently, it is reasonable for theology to be practised in the university.

The Roman Catholic theologian Gavin D'Costa furnishes a different approach to the justification of theology in the university, in the context of modern British and American universities. D'Costa begins his argument from the status quo of contemporary theology, which he describes as 'Theology's Babylonian Captivity in the Modern University.'[37] In taking a survey of the development of the university and theology therein, D'Costa makes one significant observation that the encyclopaedic tradition of previous centuries signifies 'the Oedipal configuration between theology and religious studies', which means religious studies, on the one hand, 'claim[s] Enlightenment privileges and sought to exclude theology from the university', and on the other hand, 'cohabit[s] the academic territory with theology.'[38]

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[35] *Ibid.*, 36-37.
[36] *Ibid.*, 34. Emphasis added.
[37] Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy, and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), chapter 1.
[38] *Ibid.*, 6, 20, 31-32.

However, it was the Enlightenment that caused a revolution in the study of theology in the university that led to religious studies and its "Oedipal" relationship to theology. First, theology and the contemporary university live in the shadow of the Enlightenment and the secularisation it evoked. Second, the exploration on a new type of university is underdeveloped. On the one side, 'with funding ever tighter and a market-led economy becoming pervasive … the Arts are seen increasingly as a luxury.' On the other side, 'the instrumentalist culture of modernity and the fragmentation of the disciplines' result in the fact that theology seems to lose its independence, and that its relationship to other disciplines remains to be explored; so does its relationship to religious studies.[39] Meanwhile, this also indicates the possibility for theology to act in self-defence.

D'Costa's response to the shadow of the Enlightenment is to evoke the ideal of the Medieval university. He suggests establishing a Christian Catholic university where various disciplines are married.[40] In such a Christian university, both theology—which 'must function as a servant "queen of the sciences"'—and philosophy serve as the central discipline that aims at articulating holistic and unified Christian scholarship, which has nothing but the glory of God as its *telos*.[41] Following this, he asserts that some basic theological and philosophical training should be compulsory for all academics regardless of disciplinary specialisation. Similarly, all theologians should acquire some elementary knowledge of the other sciences in order to make their contribution to the Catholic university.[42] To D'Costa, the centrality of theology in the university is of considerable significance when wrestling with the tension between theology and religious studies. He comes up with the idea of "theological religious studies", that is, the theological assessment of the assertions raised in other religions.[43] Viewed in this light, D'Costa attempts to avoid the Oedipal configuration between theology and religious studies, and intends to *theologise* religious studies in order that the latter can serve the former.[44] Moreover, he is convinced that such a theological approach to religious studies is the true spirit of tolerance. 'What is genuinely tolerant and pluralistic here is that the claims of

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[39] *Ibid.*, 17-18.
[40] *Ibid.*, 183.
[41] *Ibid.*, 184-193; also see Gavin D'Costa, "Theology and Religious Studies OR Theology *versus* Religious Studies?," in *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, ed. Darlene L. Bird and Simon G. Smith (London: Continuum, 2009), 51.
[42] D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square*, 194.
[43] *Ibid.*, chapter 5.
[44] *Ibid.*, x. In fact, this theological religious studies is part of D'Costa's larger project of Christian university. He argues, 'If the Christian university is worth its salt, *it requires a transformation of the curriculum* so that the Christian vision can illumine every aspect of created reality' (216); emphasis added.

Others are taken with proper intellectual seriousness, rather than simply bracketed off or assimilated and assessed by disciplines alien to the religion making such claims.'[45]

Clearly, D'Costa argues in a strongly Medieval tone. In his ideal Catholic university, theology occupies the very central position. Although he recognises that philosophy is crucial to the entire curriculum, philosophy's mediatorship between theology and other disciplines evidences that philosophy serves for theology.[46] In this light, it is not surprising that he describes theology as the servant Queen of the sciences yet also 'a petulant interventionist', who will intervenes by addressing the other disciplines when they 'are [not] true to their subject.'[47]

In summary, both Denys Turner and Gavin D'Costa seek to safeguard the position of theology in the university, doing so at a time in which from the Enlightenment onwards, the Queen is being dethroned without being utterly defeated. She is stubborn and seated in the academy. Hence, more efforts need to be made in order to fight back various challenges.[48] A similarity between Turner and D'Costa is that both appeal to the Medieval university as the example for the contemporary university. In this sense, Bavinck takes a similar strategy since he appropriates the Medieval slogan "theology as the Queen of the sciences." However, Bavinck does not simply speak of the university as the place of disputation and arguing, as it is portrayed by Turner. Bavinck's attempts to enrich the Medieval slogan took place in the context of neo-Calvinism, as a movement that reformulated the Reformed faith in a clearly modern way—which might mean his account has untapped potential in the twenty-first century. On the other hand, notwithstanding that Bavinck would agree with D'Costa on theology as the servant Queen, Bavinck's understanding of spiritual and moral Queenship necessarily rejects D'Costa's version of theology's very central place in the university. With the similarities and dissimilarties between Bavinck and Denys Turner and Gavin D'Costa, how can we appropriate Bavinck's *wetenschappelijke* theology to develop a Bavinckian approach to the practice of scientific theology in the twentieth-first-century university?

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[45] D'Costa, "Theology and Religious Studies OR Theology *versus* Religious Studies?," 52.
[46] D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square*, 192.
[47] *Ibid.*, 194.
[48] This is reminiscent of other theologians' effort, say, John Webster's theological theology; John Webster, *Theological Theology: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 27 October 1997* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

III. A Bavinckian Account of a Contemporary University Theologian

Whilst considering a Bavinckian argument for scientific theology in the context of the contemporary university, I would like to sum up three compelling points of Bavinck's stance according to what has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, especially chapter six. While doing this, it should be acknowledged that these three observations does not exhaust Bavinck's potential contributions to contemporary scholarship in this respect. Yet, I am convinced that the three principles belong to the *sine qua non* of the Bavinckian approach to university theology.

A. To Be Humble yet Courageous

In the analysis of Bavinck's organically *critical* realism, it has been demonstrated that for Bavinck the dispensation of the Holy Spirit determines the humble character of the theologian.[49] On the one hand, the theologian should critically receive Christian traditions and pursue fuller understanding of the Word of God. On the other hand, the theologian should be self-critical and humble since no theologian can fathom the truth of God. By the work of the Spirit, God continues to ignite more lights of truth among His people until the eschaton. According to Bavinck, this humble character is indispensable to practising theology scientifically (in the university).

Given that theology is grounded in revelation, creation as God's first revelation is of considerable importance for the development of theology. That being so, the interaction between theology and the other sciences, say natural science, will advance theological studies. In this light, the humble character refers not only to the theologian's continuing obedience to the guidance of the Spirit in knowing special revelation, but also to listening to the findings of the other sciences carefully. After all, 'Scripture but not theology is the lamp for the foot of the other sciences.'[50] This means that the achievements of the other sciences can lend support to theological studies in such way that God's revelation in Scripture will be unfolded more clearly.[51] Thus, Bavinck contends in his later years that the theologian's exegesis of Holy Scripture may need to be revised due to the new findings of the other sciences. 'While the

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[49] Chapter four, IV.B.

[50] Bavinck, *Het Recht der Kerken en de Vrijheid der Wetenschap*, 19.

[51] This can be seen in Bavinck's appropriation of the findings of geology in his elaboration on creation: 'Geology, it must be said, may render excellent service to us in the interpretation of the creation story. … Scripture and theology have nothing to fear from the facts brought to light by geology and paleontology. The world, too, is a book whose pages have been inscribed by God's almighty hand.' (*RD*, 2:496); also see D. A. Young, "The Reception of Geology in the Dutch Reformed Tradition: The Case of Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)," in *Geology and Religion: A History of Harmony and Hostility*, ed. Martina Kölbl-Ebert (London: The Geological Society, 2009), 293-296.

trustworthy results of the new natural and historical science are irreconcilable with the ordinary exegesis of the biblical story of creation, it is necessary to review this exegesis particularly with respect to the time, duration and order of the work of creation.'[52] Bavinck's bold saying at the time should not be construed in the light of the conventional model of two Bavincks. The humble character of the scientific theologian suffices to display the underlying rationale of Bavinck's assertion. Bavinck intends not to devalue Scripture, the external *principium* of theology. Rather, he appeals for the theologian's self-critical study.

To be humble is not to be timid in the sense that the theologian has to subordinate the *principium cognoscendi externum* of theology to the other sciences. According to Bavinck, *sola Scriptura* must be upheld in practising theology in the university.[53] On this ground, he attempts to engage with the other sciences. At this point, Bavinck's accent on courage, which is grounded in the theologian's belief in Scripture and which the university theologian should have, comes to the fore. This courage can be spelled out by figuring out the following questions: How does the humble theologian argue courageously in the university? In what aspects the theologian should be courageous?

a. The Humble yet Courageous Theologian: God-vision

First, based on the eschatological account of the Queenship,[54] the humble theologian should be courageous in that theology has a God-vision which helps orient the other sciences to the proper *telos*. The theocentric foundation of the theologian's courage possesses double significance. In the first place, the other sciences perceive 'the reality of an eternal and imperishable truth' through the lens of theology that is devoted to the exegesis of the truth in the gospel. Bavinck argues that science originated not in Christianity but in Greek philosophy. In the course of history, science became practical and incapable of offering a unity and satisfying the human heart. By gospel, 'an eternal, unquestionable and absolute truth' was revealed in Jesus Christ. In other words, theology showcases 'an objective reality, standing highly above but still attainable for humans. Thereby, science has been given a firm, solid and essential foundation.'[55] With this in mind, the theologian should be confident and bold in

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[52] Herman Bavinck, *'Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende': Aantekeningen van H. Bavinck over de zaak-Netelenbos, het Schriftgezag en de situatie van de Gereformeerde Kerken (november 1919)*, ed. George Harinck, Cornelis van der Kooi, and J. Vree (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994), 77.
[53] A helpful discussion on Bavinck and *sola Scriptura*, see Bruce Pass, "Upholding *Sola Scriptura* Today: Some Unturned Stones in Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of Inspiration," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20, no. 4 (2018): 517-536.
[54] Chapter six, IV.B.
[55] *CW*, 96.

declaring something that is of the highest standing reality. This means that the theological faculty of university is organised on a different ground than the other faculties. For the theological faculty, it is abnormal to seek its justification as the other faculties do. This resonates with Barth's insistence on the integrity of the theological faculty.

> Obviously, the existence of theology in the academy is not to be justified and established *a priori* but is only an emergency measure, a permanent exception to the rule, because the need will never be remedied. As such, however, the existence of theology is justified and established, as is the existence of the Church in society, out of a notion that is not its own. It is paradoxically but inevitably true that theology has no right to exist in the academy the way other sciences do. It is a completely unnecessary duplication of a few disciplines that belong to other faculties. A *theological* faculty has a reason to be in the academy only when it is charged with the task of expressing that which the others dare not say under the circumstances, or say it in a way that is not heard, or when it at least signals that such things must be said.[56]

It is explicit that both Bavinck and Barth insist on a top-down approach to explicating the *wetenschappelijke* or *wissenschaftliche* nature of theology in the university. That is, the place of theology in the university is contingent upon its God-vision. This leads to the second significance of the theocentric foundation, which helps theology orient the other sciences to the *telos*.

In the second place, the theocentric foundation of the theologian's courage confirms the limits of the other sciences and the potential contribution that theology can make to the university. In other words, theology's God-vision lays bare the impossibility that the other sciences can approach God by themselves. This impossibility is the *causa finalis* of the limits of the other sciences. To be sure, the second significance of the theocentric foundation safeguards the metaphysical foundation of all science, the shortage of which is, for Bavinck, the proof of the captivity of modern science to positivism.[57]

Although positivism has been repudiated as the dominant account of reality in the 1950s and replaced by contextualist approach to scientific rationality, Bavinck's view of the humble theologian's courage is still telling in the twenty-first century. Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that the challenge to theology's position in the contemporary university is triggered by the continuing 'Enlightenment idea of the university', which seeks to establish 'generically human scholarship.' According to this paradigm, the university's academics and students should be indifferent to their own 'beliefs, purposes, and affects.' What they can use in the academy is

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[56] Karl Barth, "The Word of God as the Task of Theology, 1922," trans. Amy Marga, in *The Word of God and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 181.
[57] Bavinck, "Religion and Theology," 89-90.

their 'indigenous, generically human hardwiring', namely, their human perceptible, rational and memorial capacities.[58] In this sense, the contemporary university holds fast to anthropological optimism, which makes use of human indigenous capacities to overcome the limits of all *wetenschap* or *Wissenschaft*. Hence, Bavinck's ideal of the humble yet courageous theologian has potential to combat such scholarly anthropocentrism.

Bavinck's ideal is resonant with the physicist William G. Pollard (1911-1989). Pollard contends for the limits of physics and all natural sciences alike, and recognises the necessity of studies that go beyond nature.

> When I am working or thinking as a physicist, I am automatically confined to objects or phenomena in three-dimensional space and time. Whatever reality transcendent to space and time there may be, I would not even know where to begin to observe or explore it by the methods of physics. The whole theoretical structure of modern physics is spatiotemporal. Every discovery of some new particle or anti particle or of some new phenomenon is a discovery of some aspect of nature previously unknown. … Science is by definition the study of nature. It possesses no means whatever of deciding either for or against any aspect of external reality which transcends the realm of nature. *If the realm of supernature exists at all it must be known and experienced in ways which lie wholly outside the scope of science.*[59]

The theologian who gives credence to the existence of the supernatural realm should be courageous to speak of what goes beyond the borders of other disciplines in the university. This leads to the second significance of being a humble yet courageous theologian.

b. The Humble yet Courageous Theologian: Interdisciplinary Interaction

The humble theologian should be courageous to engage in interdisciplinary interaction. The university theologian cannot take a deistic attitude to stand far away from the other sciences while speaking of what is beyond their limits. Rather, the courage to speak of his own subject should go hand in hand with the humility required in order to converse with the other sciences.

Despite of the shortage of the language "interdisciplinary" in Bavinck's writings, talk of the courageous to be an interdisciplines-engaged theologian can be justified with recourse to Bavinck's system. As has been argued earlier, Bavinck holds fast to the organic unity of

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[58] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Public Theology or Christian Learning?," in *A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, and the Christian Self*, ed. Miroslav Volf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 81-83.
[59] William G. Pollard, "The Recovery of Theological Perspective in a Scientific Age," in *Religion and the University* (Toranto: University of Toranto Press, 1964), 32-33; emphasis added. Similar statements can also been seen in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Men Have Forgotten God," *National Review* 35, no. 14 (1983): 872-876.

science.[60] 'All science is one, just as the creation is one, and science searches for the principle and the system that connects and supports all things.'[61] In this sense, the theologian's interdisciplinary engagement evidences the personal faith in the goodness of God's creation. Moreover, Bavinck stresses that theology and the other sciences alike have their own principles and objects.[62] As the defamed (*gesmaad*) servant Queen, therefore, theology cannot impose coercion on the practice of the other sciences, which yields the possibility of the interaction between theology and the other sciences provided that theology does not knee before other disciplines to safeguard its own place.[63] As such, it could be inferred that Bavinck's thinking potentially recognises interdisciplinary interaction as a way to defend the servant Queenship of theology in the nineteenth-century academy and the contemporary university alike.

Bavinck's humble yet courageous theologian anticipates Stanley Grenz's (1950-2005) idea of scientist theologian in the postmodern world. Concentrating on the relationship between theology and natural science in his Templeton lecture, Grenz seeks to address the question, 'how are theologians scientists?', or 'Why do theologians need to be scientists?'[64] Having examined the sway of empirical science on theology from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries and the modern appropriation of the Medieval slogan "theology as the Queen of the sciences", Grenz explores the postmodern paradigm of science as theology. He observes that the post-empirical philosophy of science developed in the twentieth century makes scientists resemble theologians. While scientists come up with proposed theories of reality, they need to *believe* the previously unknown aspects of reality that they discover now.[65] 'Theologians need to be scientists because scientists are theologians.'[66] At this point, a similarity between Grenz and Bavinck comes to be seen. As noted in chapter three, Bavinck underscores faith as indispensable to all science.[67] Hence, the Bavinckian approach will endorse Grenz that theologians need to be scientists, and vice versa, in terms of the role of faith.

The need of faith in both science and theology, for Grenz, displays the fact that theology and natural science 'are of the same order.' Moreover, it demonstrates the mysteriousness of the natural world, which means the cosmos still remains to be explored. 'For this reason, in offering their models of the universe, scientists repeatedly cross over the boundaries that

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[60] Chapter six, IV.B.
[61] *PCDS*, 93.
[62] *WHG*, 34.
[63] *WHG*, 33-35.
[64] Stanley J. Grenz, "Why Do Theologians Need to Be Scientists?," *Zygon* 35, no. 2 (2000): 332.
[65] *Ibid.*, 345-348. Here Grenz draws on Peacocke, *Intimations of Reality*, 25.
[66] Grenz, "Why Do Theologians Need to Be Scientists?," 348.
[67] Chapter three, II.B.

traditionally divided their discipline from the realm of theologians. In essence, they *become* theologians.'[68] In this sense, the language "theologian scientists" indicates the interdisciplinary interaction between theology and natural science.

Grenz describes this interdisciplinary interaction as the cooperation of the theologian and the scientist to construct the world by their respective linguistic models. Both the theologian and the scientist expect others to inhabit this linguistically constructed universe.[69] Following this, Grenz pinpoints the divergence of their linguistic models. He argues that 'the objectivity of the world about which [the theologian] can truly speak is an objectivity of a *future*, eschatological world.' Thus, the theologian is responsible for the interdisciplinary engagement in order to display 'God's own eschatological will for creation.'[70] Moreover, the theologian's linguistic model is fundamentally dependent upon the Logos, the Word, 'the ordering principle of the cosmos as God intends it to be,' and developed under the power of the Spirit.[71] Grenz concludes his lecture with an observation on the nature of this interdisciplinary interaction: 'Viewed from the perspective of Christian theology, this suggests that science devises models of a universe that is the embryo of the eschatological new creation. In so doing, science gives evidence to proleptic experiences and dimensions within the present of the future new creation that God is already in the process of fashioning.'[72]

It suffices to say that the eschatological, Christocentric and pneumatological tones of Grenz's argument resonate with Bavinck's Christological approach to the relationship between theology and the other sciences. Moreover, Grenz is unfamiliar with Bavinck's system. He draws on various twentieth-century thinkers—including Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) and T. F. Torrance—without a mention of Bavinck. However, we can discern many resonances between them. In this sense, Grenz's lecture would be a useful entry point through which the Bavinckian approach to the practice of scientific theology finds at home in the academia of the twenty-first century. Then, the Bavinckian ideal of humble yet courageous theologian heightens the contemporary theologian's obligation to undertake interdisciplinary engagement, as Grenz claims.

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[68] Grenz, "Why Do Theologians Need to Be Scientists?," 348.
[69] *Ibid.*, 350-351.
[70] *Ibid.*, 352.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Ibid.*, 353.

c. The Humble yet Courageous Theologian: Scholarly Appropriation

The interdisciplinary interaction that the university theologian should participate in implies that the theologian can learn from the other sciences. To put it another way, the humble yet courageous theologian should appropriate the achievements of the other sciences. This has a double implication. First, the university theologian should be humble in being taught by scholars of other disciplines. The God-vision should not become the cause of the theologian's arrogance in the sense that Scripture alone is supernatural revelation, which is enough for theological studies. As noted earlier, Bavinck insists on the dialectical catholicity of scientific theology and Holy Scripture as the *norma normans non normata*.[73] Such a rationale for scientific theology opens the way for the appropriation of not only theological tradition but also other results of scientific research.

Second, the university theologian should be courageous in appropriating other scholarly achievements. According to Bavinck, the doctrines of revelation and creation lay the dogmatic foundation of the theologian's confident appropriation of other disciplinary scholarship.

> Christianity is the first to make us understand that the world is one, that humankind is one, that science is one. Therefore, revelation cannot be limited to the religious-ethical, but from this midpoint its light also falls on the whole natural life, on earth and heaven, plant and animal, angel and humans, on all creatures. And thus, the object of theology is not merely the knowledge of God, but also that of creatures insofar as they are related to God and reveal Him.[74]

In this light, the scientific theologian's courage in appropriating other scientific achievements, in essence, exhibits the faith in the Triune God who creates, preserves and consummates creation. This courageous scholarly action is evident in Bavinck's system. Two examples can be cited.

Bavinck's study on μυστηριον and dogmatics is a strong evidence for his humble yet courageous scholarly appropriation. Whilst construing the meaning of μυστηριον, as Eglinton remarks, Bavinck adopted the research results 'at the cutting edge of Greco-Roman studies' at the time.[75] He points out that, albeit the Greek etymological origin, the meaning of μυστηριον

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[73] Chapter five, II.A.

[74] Bavinck, "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap," 197. Dutch original: 'het Christendom heeft het ons 't eerst doen verstaan, dat de wereld, dat de menschheid, dat de wetenschap ééne is. Daarom kan de openbaring niet strikt tot het religieus-ethische beperkt wezen, maar laat van dit middelpunt uit haar licht ook vallen over heel het natuurlijke leven, over aarde en hemel, plant en dier, engel en mensch, over al het geschapene. En daarom is object der Theologie niet bloot de kennis Gods, maar ook die der creatuur inzoover zij tot God in relatie staat en Hem openbaart.'

[75] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 98, note 69. Bavinck drew on three most recent publications in this field *RD*, 1:619, note 47; Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, Sixth Edition ed., ed. A. M. Fairbairn (London; Edinburgh; Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1897), (the

was refashioned in the New Testament. Rather than referring to something like the 'secret religious-political doctrine' in Greek literature, 'the word consistently has a religious meaning and refers to a matter belonging to the kingdom of God,' which had been unknown and concealed yet was revealed to God's people in Christ.[76] 'The NT term μυστηριον, accordingly, does not denote an intellectually uncomprehended and incomprehensible truth of faith but a matter that was formerly hidden in God, was then made known in the gospel, and is now understood by believers.'[77] By doing so, Bavinck shows his scholarly integrity in rejecting the mysterious character of dogma from both etymological and historical perspectives. Meanwhile, he showcases how the New Testament authors were courageous in refashioning the terms of their time yet without distorting the gospel.

A stronger case for Bavinck's humble yet courageous scholarly appropriation is his appreciative use of religious studies. As noted in chapter two, Bavinck vigorously denounced the Higher Education Act (1876) that sought to substitute the faculty of religious science for the theological faculty in Dutch universities in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Bavinck appreciatively appropriated Tiele's scholarly output of religious studies many times in *Reformed Dogmatics*.

Bavinck's reference to Tiele in *Reformed Dogmatics* falls within nineteen sections across the four volumes. Of them, only three places are in Bavinck's critique of religious science. The first one is Bavinck's critique of the Higher Education Act and its consequent effect.[78] Bavinck's second criticism of Tiele is grounded in his assessment that Tiele holds a pantheistic notion of revelation.[79] The third critique of Tiele is derived from the latter's misunderstanding of the visible church.[80]

On a detailed reading of *Reformed Dogmatics*, it can be seen that the three negative estimations are overwhelmed by another fifteen positive appraisals of Tiele's religious science. Basically, these sympathetic assessments can be divided into three categories. First, Bavinck frequently draws support from Tiele's religious science to confirm the validity and value of

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source Bavinck cited was the original edition published in 1892); Gustav Anrich, *Das antike Mysteriewesen in Seinim Einfluss auf das Christenthum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1894); Georg Wobbermin, *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Frage nach der Beeinflussung des Urchristenthum durch das antike Mysterienwesen* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1896).

[76] *RD*, 1:619; *GD*, 1:589.

[77] *RD*, 1:620; *GD*, 1:589.

[78] *RD*, 1:49.

[79] *RD*, 1:292.

[80] *RD*, 4:296. According to Bavinck, Tiele understands the visible church 'as a form of existence the believing community has assumed for itself and can alter as circumstances change.' Bavinck maintains that this point of view opposes 'the divine institution of the church.' (4:295) What Bavinck criticises can be seen on Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 165-166.

religion.[81] In this respect, it is interesting to find that Bavinck believes that Tiele's research had falsified Feuerbach's view of theology as anthropological.[82] Second, Bavinck references to Tiele to demonstrate that revelation is essential to religion.[83] This means that religion seeks for truth so that religious conceptions should not underestimated.[84] Third, Bavinck uses Tiele's sentiments to spell out several aspects of God's salvation, such as Tiele's insistence on universal belief in mediator,[85] universal notion of sacrifice,[86] and general human belief in the immortality of soul.[87] Moreover, as religion has a social element, God's salvation of course gives birth to the Church.[88] Apart from the fifteen sympathetic appraisals, Bavinck makes recourse to Tiele to reject the sentiment that Persian doctrine of angels came from Judaism.[89]

Bavinck's sympathy with Tiele's scholarly output, of course, exhibits the catholicity of scientific theology, that is, theology's extending to all creation.[90] In some sense, Bavinck's appreciative way of appropriating religious science offers a more moderate approach to religious studies in the contemporary university than Turner and D'Costa. In the construal of theology's due place in the nineteenth-century Dutch university, Bavinck did not attempt to devalue the other disciplines, even the one that threatened theology's existence. This is a noteworthy reminder for the contemporary university, where theology is confronted by various challenges from other disciplines.

My discourse thus far emphasises that both humility and courage are indispensable for being a university theologian. As Eglinton argues, boldness and humility are in concatenation in such a sense that 'boldness without humility soon collapses into arrogance, whereas humility without boldness quickly takes its place on a spectrum of relativism, indifference and unbelief.'[91] Moreover, it can be seen clearly that the humility and courage are not merely the performance of theology qua discipline but also the character of the university theologian qua human being. This leads to the second principle of the Bavinckian approach to the practice of theology in the contemporary university, which will enrich the first one.

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[81] *RD*, 1:248, 1:269, 1:274, 1:278, 1:316, 2:57, 2:531, 3:184.
[82] *RD*, 1:274; Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, 2:227-233.
[83] This sentiment can be seen *PR*, 142-169.
[84] *RD*, 1:249, 1:284, 1:613.
[85] *RD*, 3:329.
[86] *RD*, 3:330.
[87] *RD*, 4:590.
[88] *RD*, 4:276.
[89] *RD*, 2:444.
[90] Chapter five, II.B.
[91] James Eglinton, "Vox Theologiae: Boldness and Humility in Public Theological Speech," *International Journal of Public Theology* 9, no. 1 (2015): 14.

B. The Ontological Priority of Human Agent

Since Descartes' dictum *Cogito ergo sum*, Western philosophy and metaphysics embarked on the shift of the emphasis from ontology to epistemology. For Descartes, all the methods to prove human existence can be reduced to *Cogito ergo sum*, insofar as anything used as the proof is first of all conceptual and intellectual. Thereby, what we can prove first is not the existence of body but rather the nature that thinks.[92] The precedence of the nature that thinks was enhanced by Kant's refashioning metaphysics by prioritising the question on the possibility of knowing over the question on the being. Hence, as Bonhoeffer sketches Western philosophy since the seventeenth century, '[w]herever the capacity of human beings to know is attacked, nothing less than being human itself is at stake, which is the reason why, ever since Descartes, the passion of philosophy has burnt so strongly here.'[93]

It was in this philosophical climate that Bavinck took pains to account for the relationship between theology and the other sciences. As construed in chapter six while explaining Bavinck's idea of the sovereignty of science, I have made the observation that due to the respective God-given sphere sovereignty in the institutional church and science, the human agent is responsible for undertaking activities in each sphere under its respective sovereignty. Human knowing should be bound to objective reality *per se*, thereby revealing the increated *imago Dei* and the received dominion over or stewardship of creation.[94] Granted that being and knowing are inseparable, being is nevertheless not subject to knowing. Accordingly, Bavinck's ontological primacy was squarely antagonistic to the mainstream of epistemological priority at his time. In like manner, it stands in opposition to present day university education, which, according to John Webster, is gradually shifting from *Bildung* to *Wissenschaft*. *Bildung* aims at 'the cultivation of *a particular kind of person* who has acquired certain habits of mind and will, a certain cast or temper of the soul, and so is oriented what is considered to be the good and the true.'[95] By contrast, *Wissenschaft* lays emphasis on the 'the activities of enquiry', which accentuates the independence of reason and 'transcend all localities and instead summon those localities for review.'[96] The landscape of contemporary university education painted by Webster is reflective of the consequence of prioritising knowing over being. Therefore, while

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[92] René Descartes, "To Reneri for Pollot, April or May 1638," *The Correspondence*, trans. John Cottingham et al., The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 98.
[93] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, ed. Hans-Richard Reuter and Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 30.
[94] Chapter 6, III.A.
[95] Webster, *Theological Theology*, 6; emphasis added.
[96] *Ibid.*, 6-7.

considering whether a Bavinckian approach to academic theology might be possible in the contemporary university, we cannot but examine how and to what extent Bavinck's ontological priority benefits contemporary scholarship and learning.

Bavinck's ontological priority over epistemology is, as noted earlier, related to his theology of the *imago Dei*. The lengthy quotation below is a core thesis concerning the ontological significance of the image of God.

> Thus man forms a unity of the material and spiritual world, a mirror of the universe, a connecting link, compendium, the epitome of all of nature, a microcosm, and, precisely on that account, also the image and likeness of God, his son and heir, a micro-divine-being (*mikrotheos*). He is the prophet who explains God and proclaims his excellencies; he is the priest who consecrates himself with all that is created to God as a holy offering; he is the king who guides and governs all things in justice and rectitude. And in all this he points to One who in a still higher and richer sense is the revelation and image of God, to him who is the only begotten of the Father, and the firstborn of all creatures. Adam, the son of God, was a type of Christ.[97]

Accordingly, the *imago Dei* entails a double implication for our understanding of the theologian's role in the university: the human agent qua theologian and the human agent qua university academic.

a. The Human Agent qua Theologian

The core thesis shows that, as the *imago Dei*, the human agent qua theologian is responsible for pointing everything to the true image of God, which is Christ, and to the archetype of the human *imago Dei*, God Himself. That being so, the human agent cannot dispense with religious faith while practising theological studies in the academy if the agent is a true theologian. At this point, I point back to my analysis in chapters 3-5, which depicted the considerable importance of faith to a scientific theologian. This is more salient in Bavinck's description of general *wetenschap*—in the underlying assumption that the object of science is knowable[98]—and of particular *wetenschap* (theology)—in its assumptions of God's existence and self-revelation.[99] As all science requires faith prior to studies, theological studies necessitates the theologian's faith. More importantly, Bavinck associates the theologian's Christian faith and confessions with the falling or standing of the independence of theology. He asserts that theology will not be incorporated into the faculty of religious science or other

[97] *RD*, 2:562; *GD*, 2:524.
[98] *RD*, 1:90; *GD*, 1:66; chapter 3, II.B.
[99] Chapter 3, IV.B.b.

faculties provided that believing and knowing are not separated.[100] In other words, the independence of theology is contingent upon the cooperation of the theologian's believing and knowing, rather than upon intellectual activities alone. Therefore, we can imagine that a Bavinckian view would not subscribe to the contemporary idea that the theologian should cast aside all presuppositions, especially the religious, and enter into academia in neutrality and with neutral reason.

In fact, Bavinck's work is replete with the rejection of the alleged academic neutrality. According to him, such neutrality cannot be imposed upon theology by any person, organisation or institution. In his own context, he stressed that the State could not even guarantee neutrality since it had its own confessions, that is, its political liberalism. In this regard, Bavinck targeted at the Higher Education Act of 1876. Bavinck believed that the purpose of the Act to refrain *wetenschap* from developing in one direction (theology) was reflective of the confession of the Dutch State on higher education. That is to say, the Act itself was not neutral. Any external coercion *ipso facto* overthrew the alleged neutrality.[101] Viewed in this light, human subjective belief and presuppositions are, at least, latent in one's research. They are something that ontologically consists in the human agent regardless of external coercion. Thus, there is no absolute objective neutrality.

It should be mentioned, however, that Bavinck does retain a type of academic neutrality, which is ontologically determined by the being of the human agent.

> However, there is no science without assumptions, which, either as the point of departure or as working hypotheses, first make possible the work of studies. The human mind (*geest*) never works as a merely logical machine and can never withdraw from the influence of his emotional and volitional life. Neither may even the most sober thinker be able to detach himself from what is put in his soul upon the conviction of heart (*gemoedsovertuiging*), deeper judgement and insight, higher conception and intimate conviction. But the man of science would make use of his assumptions as long as they serve him, he maintains his standpoint as long as it proves tenable. Neutrality in the sense of being disconnected from and indifferent to one's holiest beliefs is either absurd or, if possible, a sin. But neutrality in the sense of objectivity vis-à-vis traditional and one's own ideas, albeit so cherished conceptions, is both a scientific and a religious duty.[102]

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[100] Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 11.
[101] *CW*, 33.
[102] *CW*, 26-27. Dutch origina: 'Wel is er geen wetenschap zonder onderstellingen, die of als uitgangspunt of als werkhypothesen het studiewerk eerst mogelijk maken. Ook arbeidt de menschelijke geest nooit als eene louter logische machine en kan hij zich nooit aan den invloed van zijn aandoenings- en wilsleven onttrekken. Ook de nuchterste denker kan noch mag zich los maken van wat er aan gemoedsovertuiging, aan dieper inzicht en doorzicht, aan hooger conceptie en intieme convictie in zijne ziel leeft. Maar de wetenschappelijke mensch gebruikt zijne onderstellingen slechts zoolang ze hem dienen, hij behoudt zijn standpunt alleen

Bavinck makes it clear that the true academic neutrality is something that is concerned with the being of academics (theologians). That is, the neutrality is shaped after the formation and on the ground of the intellectual, emotional and volitional life of the human agent. In other words, the academic neutrality for the university theologian is pertinent to the omnibearing life of the human agent qua theologian. To be sure, the theologian's Christian faith, dispositions and confessions should not be counted out.[103]

Bavinck's emphasis on the ontological priority in academic life is imperative and beneficial to the contemporary university. One salient case can be seen in Nicholas Wolterstorff's work. Wolterstorff acknowledges that '[the neo-Calvinist] denial of the neutrality and autonomy of scholarship with respect to religion was something [he] embraced early on, and which [he] continue[s] to embrace.'[104] Under the influence of neo-Calvinism (in which Bavinck was one of the leading figures), Wolterstorff repudiates classical foundationalism's search for value-neutral knowledge. Instead, he comes up with the notion of control beliefs: 'Everyone who weighs a theory has certain beliefs as to what constitutes an acceptable sort of theory on the matter under consideration.'[105] By the notion of control beliefs, he construes human rationality as, according to Andrew Sloane, 'defeasible, person– and situation-specific.'[106] In short, Wolterstorff is an exemplar which shows how a Bavinckian approach to scientific theology could be applied to the contemporary university.

Outwith the neo-Calvinist circle, Andrew Torrance's article on analytic theology presents the same stance. In this article, Torrance suggests a scientific approach to analytic theology: 'an approach to analytic theology in which the theologian is expected to approach and give an account of [God and all things in relation to God] in a way that seeks to correspond to or track

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zoolang het houdbaar blijkt. Neutraliteit in den zin van los-zijn van en onverschillig-zijn voor zijne heiligste overtuigingen, is Of eene ongerijmdheid, Of, zoo al mogelijk, eene zonde. Maar neutraliteit in den zin van objectiviteit tegenover traditioneele voorstellingen en tegenover eigen, zij het nog zoo geliefkoosde begrippen, is zoowel wetenschappelijke als godsdienstige plicht.'

[103] This characteristic feature of ontological priority can also be seen in Bavinck's discourse on eloquence: 'In order to speak *well*, one must exist *well*. Our word then becomes what it must be, as the image and likeness of ourselves, and we ourselves once again the image and likeness of God. Then it is not empty, idle, or hollow, but rather the revelation of the most intimate part of one's person, soul of one's soul, spirit of one's spirit.' Herman Bavinck, "Eloquence," in *Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers*, ed. and trans. James Eglinton (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2017), 27.

[104] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "On Christian Learning," in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, ed. Paul A. Marshall, S. Griffioen, and Richard J. Mouw (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 68.

[105] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 67.

[106] Andrew Sloane, *On Being a Christian in the Academy: Nicholas Wolterstorff and the Practice of Christian Scholarship* (Eugene: Wipf&Stock, 2003), 79-110.

the reality of [God and all things in relation to God].'[107] Clearly, Torrance's basis for argument is theocentrism, which necessitates the Christian faith in God for the analytic theologian. Moreover, he contends that this faith commitment does not undermine the scientificity of analytic theology. On the contrary, this confessionally committed theology is more scientific 'because of its commitment to being true to the mind-independent object (or subject) of theology (God), in a way that is accountable to the self-revelation of that object.'[108] Thereby, the analytic theologian qua Christian can offer valuable 'argumentative rigor, clarity, and precision.'[109]

Torrance knows well about the idiosyncrasy of contemporary university education, which seems to eradicate the possibility of his scientific approach. Interestingly, Torrance defines his scientific analytic theology as corresponding to the marrow of university education. He contends:

> Given that the university is obliged to treat most truth-claims as provisional (so as to invite falsification), the university should be open to diverse approaches to the theological task, and this will require scholars to recognize the mutual exclusivity of their divergent epistemic bases. To take the above seriously and not fall prey to the prevailing "-ism" of a particular academic culture, theology departments should allow theologians to make exclusive truth claims about [God and all things in relation to God] in their particular study of [God and all things in relation to God]. If the university does not welcome such an approach, then it is, in effect, requiring academics, who operate from a particular epistemic base, to disguise or conceal what they recognize to be true and thereby deny or compromise their intellectual integrity.[110]

Conjoining Torrance's and Bavinck's shared contentions, it could be argued that the contemporary university should actively safeguard the theologian's religious confession in order to cultivate the intellectual integrity of the academic qua *theologian*. Meanwhile, university theologians should demonstrate and construe their Christian confession on God courageously and scholarly. As Kristensen argues,

> The foundation of all science is faith. But there is an ascending order of sciences, and the personal factor in research plays a greater role the higher we ascend, the more comprehensive the field, and the more the science ceases to be merely formal. Bavinck returns to this personal factor time and time again. None of our spiritual faculties come into their own in isolation. This is especially true in theology, the central science, which demands one's whole personality for itself. For theology is

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[107] Andrew Torrance, "The Possibility of a Scientific Approach to Analytic Theology," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7 (2019): 179.
[108] *Ibid.*, 184.
[109] *Ibid.*, 186.
[110] *Ibid.*, 186-187.

> itself religion. It is not the science of Christianity but Christianity itself as science. And it is a general rule that when the richest thoughts, the boldest concepts, the most important discoveries of imagination, of intuition, derive from divination, then the true theologian holds that the Holy Spirit is leading in the truth.[111]

Only by the faith in and confession of the Triune God can a university theologian fulfil his or her role of the academic qua *theologian*, which leads to the second implication of the role of university theologian.

b. The Human Agent qua University Academic

The discussion on the human agent qua theologian is articulated from the perspective of the theologian's religious identity. This entails a question: How is the theologian part of the broader group of university academics? In the previous section on the humble yet courageous theologian, I have illustrated the role of the theologian in the university via the lens of interdisciplinary interaction and scholarly appropriation. Nonetheless, a question remains to be addressed: What response can the university theologian expect from the academics of other disciplines? As the earlier lengthy quotation shows, the human being as the *imago Dei* is responsible to point all things to Christ and God.[112] Given God as the unique object of theology, the theologian is responsible for pointing all things to the Triune God in terms of both creation and recreation. This weighty obligation may induce the theologian to impose her stance upon other disciplines normatively. Needless to say, a Bavinckian approach would not take such an aggressive step in view of Bavinck's idea of the sovereignty of science.

In order to avoid such a hegemonic gesture, the human agent qua university academic should figure out what the theologian can convey within the orbit of his or her Christian commitment in light of a Bavinckian view of scientific theology. The Trinitarian grammar, as articulated in chapters 4-5, demonstrates that scientific theology is characterised by the *exitus-reditus* scheme: scientific theology must flow from the Triune God on account of God's self-revelation and return to the Triune God by virtue of the divine self-glorification. This scheme is perfectly congruent with Bavinck's Christological construal of theology's Queenship, namely theology's ruling over the other sciences spiritually and morally.[113] Another of Bavinck's assertions further explicates and then heightens the implication of theology's moral and spiritual Queenship. Whilst arguing for the blessing of Christianity for *wetenschap*, Bavinck contends:

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[111] Kristensen, "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work," 42.
[112] *RD*, 2:562; *GD*, 2:524.
[113] Chapter 6, IV.A.

> Yet, there is no doubt that Jesus did not act as a reformer of the state and society, nor dedicated his life to the practice of art and science. What [Jesus Christ] brought was something completely different and higher. He has brought to us the gospel of God's grace in His person, in His Word and in His work. He has founded the kingdom of God on earth and by His justice opened up the entrance for us to it. The gospel is the message of blessing for the guilty and lost sinner. … Therefore, it is precisely an abundant blessing for the whole human being, for the world and humankind, for state and society, for art and science.[114]

According to Bavinck, granted that Holy Scripture is the *principium* of theology and that Christ is the organic centre of God's revelation, university theologians who point all things to Christ and God must follow Jesus's path in not dedicating themselves entirely to the practice of art and science. Rather, a theologian qua university academic ought to export the redemptive message and blessing of the gospel to the sphere of every science. It should be noted that Bavinck's account of the spiritual and moral blessing is by no means deprived of an intellectual dimension. While illustrating the doxological teleology of scientific theology in chapter five, it has been demonstrated that intelligence and doxology belong together in scientific theology; hence, scientific theology belongs to the university rather than the private seminary. In other words, the unity of spirituality and intelligence underlies the university theologian's way of interacting with the academics from other disciplines. Thus, Bavinck argues,

> Indeed, the Scripture does not mean to teach us all kinds of human science. The Bible is not a source of knowledge for the secular sciences and arts, but solely and only for theology. It is impossible to draw from the Holy Scripture a system of logic, philosophy, astronomy, geology, jurisprudence, natural science, etc. … But it is equally true on the other side that the Scripture, just to give us a purely "spiritual" knowledge, often comes into contact with other mundane sciences. It is not dualistic. It well distinguishes the natural and the spiritual but does not separate them. … *Therefore, revelation cannot be limited to the religious-ethical, but from this midpoint its light also falls on the whole natural life*, on earth and heaven, plant and animal, angel and humans, on all creatures. And thus, the object of theology is not merely the knowledge of God, but also that of creatures insofar as they are related to God and reveal Him.[115]

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[114] *CW*, 95. Dutch original: 'Toch is het aan geen twijfel onderhevig, dat Jezus niet opgetreden is als een hervormer van staat en maatschappij en evenmin aan de beoefening van kunst en wetenschap zijn leven heeft gewijd. Wat Hij brengen kwam, was iets geheel anders en hoogers. Hij heeft in zijn persoon, in zijn woord en in zijn werk, ons het Evangelie van Gods genade gebracht; Hij heeft het koninkrijk Gods op aarde gesticht en door zijne gerechtigheid ons den toegang ertoe ontsloten. Het Evangelie is de boodschap der zaligheid voor schuldige en verlorene zondaren. ... Maar juist daardoor is het voor den ganschen mensch, is het voor wereld en menschheid, voor staat en maatschappij, voor kunst en wetenschap tot een overvloedigen zegen.'

[115] Bavinck, "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap," 196-197; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'inderdaad de Schrift niet bedoelt, ons allerlei menschelijke wetenschap te leeren. De Bijbel is geen kenbron voor de seculaire wetenschappen en kunsten, maar enkel en alleen voor de Theologie. Een systeem van logika, philosophie, astronomie, geologie, rechtsgeleerdheid, natuurwetenschap enz. uit de H. Schriften te putten, is onmogelijk. … Maar nu is het ter anderer zijde evenzeer waar, dat de Schrift, juist om ons eene zuivere

A significant observation can be made that, using the religious-ethical as the midpoint, all human life is spiritualised and moralised. In this light, the Christian theologian qua academic can contribute a well-constructed system of Christianised knowledge regarding the created order. Again, Bavinck's emphasis on the ontological priority comes to the fore. Being a Christian determines the *modus operandi* of the theologian's intelligence. Being is the determiner for knowing. In this light, the Christian theologian qua university academic offers an alternative angle from which the academics of other disciplines can learn another epistemological approach to the objects investigated.

Bavinck's stance lends support to an important recent theory of the theology of science in studies on the relationship between theology and natural science. By repudiating the complementary relationship of religion and natural science, the physicist and natural philosopher Tom McLeish has suggested that theology and natural science are 'of each other.'[116] Inasmuch as '[natural science] involves the negotiation of a new relationship between human minds and the physical world', and inasmuch as Holy Scripture applies the theme of reconciliation to the relationship 'between humankind and nature itself', McLeish defines the theology of science as follows: 'Science is the participative, relational, cocreative work within the kingdom of God of healing the fallen relationship of humans with nature.'[117] Apparently, both Bavinck and McLeish accentuate the academic qua Christian who offers an unusual spiritualised narrative of nature and natural science. Also evidently, McLeish's construal of the theology of science is thin in terms of ontology. It remains to be unanswered that to what extent the academic is justified to bring forth a theology of science. Thus, the Bavinckian account of the ontological priority of human agent and the notion of the sovereignty of science behind it can underpin McLeish's explication of "*of* each other".

"geestelijke" kennis te geven, dikwerf met al die andere mundane wetenschappen in aanraking komt. Dualistisch is zij niet; … Daarom kan de openbaring niet strikt tot het religieus-ethische beperkt wezen, maar laat van dit middelpunt uit haar licht ook vallen over heel het natuurlijke leven, over aarde en hemel, plant en dier, engel en mensch, over al het geschapene. En daarom is object der Theologie niet bloot de kennis Gods, maar ook die der creatuur inzoover zij tot God in relatie staat en Hem openbaart.'

[116] Tom McLeish, "The Science-and-Religion Delusion: Towards a Theology of Science," in *Knowing Creation*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 305.

[117] *Ibid.*, 319-320; also see Tom McLeish, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 166-212. The idea of the theology of science is used by Ruth Bancewicz to develop a notion of "scientist-believer", which demonstrates that 'science is something a Christian can do alongside all the other pursuits that are part of an active life of worshipping God.' Ruth M. Bancewicz, "The Scientist-Believer: Following Christ as We Uncover the Wonders of the Living World," in *Christ and the Created Order*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 273-288, particularly 274-276.

In summary, the Bavinckian ontological priority of the human agent draws one's attention to *theologian* qua academic first, and then to theologian qua *academic*. Being is always prior to knowing. Nonetheless, the benefits of a Bavinckian system for the contemporary university theologian are more than this. Bavinck's viewpoint of theology's Queenship furnishes a specific intersection where theology and the other disciplines meet in the university.

C. Theological Ethics as the Interdisciplinary Point of Contact

In Bavinck's dispute with Lindeboom and Kuyper, it has been shown that Bavinck's ontological priority prevents scientific theology from being subordinate to the institutional church. Moreover, this stance is strengthened by his spiritual and moral qualification of theology's Queenship. By doing so, Bavinck creates space for an intellectually egalitarian interaction between theology qua discipline and the other disciplines. In other words, albeit serving for the church, theology cannot impose its statements upon the other disciplines as the guiding principles for practising other sciences. Bavinck's viewpoint warrants further clarification, inasmuch as he fails to account clearly for the interdisciplinary point of contact between theology and the other disciplines in the university. Nonetheless, a clue to pinning down the point of contact can be found in Bavinck's writings, and can be used to articulate a Bavinckian approach to the interdisciplinary point of contact in the contemporary university. While delivering the lecture *Het Doctorenambt* (*The Office of Doctor*) on 6 December 1899, when Bavinck was appointed as the rector of the Theological School in Kampen, his construal of the relationship between the institutional church and the university is heuristic on this matter.

> However, the Church does not predetermine the means of coercion, but can only bear testimony and make this testimony agreeable to the human conscience. It can only overcome by the Word and the Spirit. It is permitted to restrict the freedom of the word, the freedom of learning, the freedom of science by no other way than by the *moral power*, which emanates from its own confession; the license for teaching (*licentia docendi*), which it grants, is *ethical*, not legal in character.[118]

Although Bavinck's contention here is pertinent to the debates on the right of the institutional church to appoint theological professors of the Free University in Amsterdam at the time, a basic principle can be discerned that the moral and ethical doctrines that are displayed by the confession of the Church can be established as the interdisciplinary point of contact between

[118] Bavinck, *Doctorenambt*, 54; emphasis added. Dutch original: 'De kerk echter beschikt over geen middelen van dwang, kan alleen getuigen en deze getuigenis aangenaam maken aan de gewetens der menschen. Zij kan alleen overwinnen door het Woord en den Geest. Zij mag de vrijheid des woords, de vrijheid der leer, de vrijheid der wetenschap op geen andere wijze beperken dan door de zedelijke kracht, die van haar eigen belijdenis uitgaat; de licentia docendi, welke zij verleent, is ethisch, niet juridisch van aard.'

theology and the other disciplines. This observation can be further solidified by Bavinck's lengthy discourse on the relationship of the church and the world.

> Accordingly, the relationship that has to exist between the church and the world is in the first place organic, moral, and spiritual in character. Christ—even now—is prophet, priest, and king; and by his Word and Spirit he persuasively impacts the entire world. Because of him there radiates from everyone who believes in him a renewing and sanctifying influence upon the family, society, state, occupation, business, art, science, and so forth. The spiritual life is meant to refashion the natural and moral life in its full depth and scope according to the laws of God. Along this organic path Christian truth and the Christian life are introduced into all the circles of the natural life, so that life in the household and the extended family is restored to honor, the wife (woman) is again viewed as the equal of the husband (man), the sciences and arts are Christianized, the level of the moral life is elevated, society and state are reformed, laws and institutions, morals and customs are made Christian.[119]

Accordingly, it can be seen that this organic, moral and spiritual relationship is the metanarrative of all relationship between the Christian and the non-Christian. In this light, the organic, moral and spiritual relationship between the church and the world lays the foundation for the interdisciplinary relationship between theology and the other sciences in the university. Given the shortage of clarification on this interdisciplinary point of contact in Bavinck's system, I attempt to define and illustrate theological ethics as this point.

a. Theological Ethics in Bavinck's System

If we grasp the role that theological ethics plays in Bavinck's system, its function as the interdisciplinary point of contact spontaneously comes to be seen. The recently published *Gereformeerde Ethiek* (*Reformed Ethics*) by Bavinck offers us critical materials on this matter.[120]

According to Bavinck, dogmatics and ethics cannot be identified; nor one is subordinate to the other. He qualifies their relationship as follows:

> In dogmatics we are concerned with what God does for us and in us. In dogmatics God is everything. Dogmatics is a word from God to us, coming from outside us and above us; we are passive, listening, and opening ourselves to being directed by God. In ethics, we are interested in the question of what it is that God now expects of us when he does his work in us. What do we do for him? Here we are active, precisely because of and on the grounds of God's deeds in us; we sing psalms in thanks and praise to God. In dogmatics, God descends to us; in ethics, we ascend

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[119] *RD*, 4:437; *GD*, 4:418.

[120] It is worth noting that *Gereformeerde Ethiek* is edited and published according to Bavinck's manuscripts on Reformed ethics; for a helpful introduction in this respect, see Dirk van Keulen and John Bolt, "Introduction to Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," in Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, xxi-xliii.

> to God. In dogmatics, he is ours; in ethics, we are his. In dogmatics, we know we shall see his face; in ethics, his name will be written on our foreheads (Rev. 22:4). Dogmatics proceeds from God; ethics returns to God. In dogmatics, God loves us; in ethics, therefore, we love him.[121]

Bavinck makes it clear that a certain difference can be drawn between dogmatics and theological ethics, which is caused by their peculiarities. As such, theological ethics is not a subdiscipline of dogmatics, which fall shorts of its independence. Hence, Bavinck refuses to link theological ethics to dogmatics, but suggests linking it to practical theology.[122]

It does not mean that Bavinck ruptures theological ethics from dogmatics. The claim that '[d]ogmatics proceeds from God; ethics returns to God' has laid a solid theocentric foundation for the affinity between these two disciplines. The positive revelationalism of Bavinck's scientific theology has illustrated that God's self-revelation as recorded in Holy Scripture is the point of departure for dogmatics.[123] In like manner, Bavinck speaks of revelation as the *principium* of theological ethics: 'Theological ethics does not proceed from a nature in humanity, in a principle embedded in creation, but from a revealed principle that comes from God and his deeds, his words for and to us, deeds and words that lead us back to God and find in him their goal.'[124] Given the divine initiative, Bavinck argues with the exactly same language in *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Reformed Ethics* that both dogmatics and ethics is '*uit*, *door*, *tot* God', namely, 'from God, by God, for God.'[125] 'Ethics is as closely related to and fully dependent on Holy Scripture as is dogmatics.'[126]

Bavinck employs organic language in *Reformed Dogmatics* to describe the affinity of dogmatics and ethics. He contends: 'Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God; ethics is that of the service of God. The two sciences [*wetenschappen*] does not stand independently against each other, but together form one system, are related members of one organism.'[127] The organic relationship of the two disciplines indicates that, as Eglinton describes, theological ethics 'gave shape to' dogmatics—that is, despite the precedence of dogmatics to theological ethics, the former can only be fulfilled in ethics.[128] To put it another way, theological ethics is

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[121] Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 22; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 47. A parallel statement can be found in *RD*, 1:58; *GD*, 1:35.
[122] Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 21; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 46.
[123] Chapter four, II.A.
[124] Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 25-26; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 46.
[125] *GD*, 1:31; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 49; cf. *RD*, 1:53; Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 26.
[126] Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 26; Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 49.
[127] *GD*, 1:35-36; *RD*, 1:58; rev.
[128] James Eglinton, "On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 167, 184.

the embodiment of dogmatics. That is, the system of the *service* of God, which is constructed by theological ethics and is visible, embodies the invisible system of the *knowledge* of God.

How can we develop a Bavinckian approach to the practice of scientific theology in the contemporary university? The analysis above proves that the answer to this question cannot dispense with Bavinck's theological ethics. He endows theological ethics with considerable importance that, as a science and discipline, theological ethics reveals scientific theology to the fellow university disciplines in a concrete way. In this sense, the Bavinckian approach makes theological ethics the interdisciplinary point of contact whereby the treasures of the Christian faith are introduced and proclaimed to the other sciences.

b. Theological Ethics as Operative in the University

How and to what extent is the interdisciplinary point of contact operative within the life of the university? Prior to tackling this question, we need first to reckon with what the life of the contemporary university is. At this point, we should recall the brief survey of the history of theology in the university at the outset of this chapter. This is because theology and the emergence of the university are historically inseparable. The dethroning Queenship exposes the essence of the life of the contemporary university, that is, the life of secularism. According to Charles Taylor, the secularism of the contemporary world 'takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others.'[129] The divine authority has gone, and the human self-judgement and autonomous research usurp the throne. This is the cause of the life of the contemporary university. John Webster puts it well:

> The modern research university conducts its business on the basis of a particular "anthropology of enquiry". That is to say, underlying its specific practices and preferred modes of research, its norms of acceptability and its structures of evaluation, is an account of the intellectual life, of what intellectual *selfhood* ought to look like. That anthropology, largely implicit but nevertheless possessed of enormous authority, is bound up with some of the most potent moral and spiritual ideals of *freedom* from determination by situation, which is one of the deep foundations of liberal culture.[130]

Two observations can be made here. First, both the selfhood and freedom hold sway on both the intellectual and moral dimensions. Indeed, the university serves not only for intellectual formation but also for moral cultivation. While the university undergoes revolution, both dimensions will be transformed. Second, the notions of selfhood and freedom imply the

[129] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.
[130] Webster, *Theological Theology*, 4.

intellectual and moral plurality in the university. In that setting, it seems that intellectual and moral judgements can be made by every single person. Clearly, such individualism is reflective of the shift in the emphasis from *Bildung* to *Wissenschaft* in the university, as noted earlier according to Webster. In discussing the failure of the contemporary university, Stanley Hauerwas is critical of this individualism as one crucial cause of the corruption of youth. The university endorses a world-and life-view in which moral life is shaped by personal choice—that is 'consumer choice'—rather than 'through the disciplined discovery of the good.'[131]

To be clear, the secularised university threatens the status of Christian theology as a university discipline. Nonetheless, secularism cannot be defined reductively as anti-religious reduction. In fact, the aforementioned intellectual and moral individualism signifies a type of disciplinary inclusiveness, which makes room for teaching theology in the university. From this vantage point, it can be seen that there is an awkward tension in the contemporary university. That is, its opposition to theology at the disciplinary level is the warrant for teaching theology. If every academic and student in the university is entitled to take the anthropology of enquiry and make moral and intellectual choice autonomously, university theologians are of course guaranteed to practise theology by their own religious choice to commit to God's revelation in Holy Scripture both dogmaticly (intellectually) and morally. In this sense, to paraphrase Taylor's language, Christian theology which is grounded in 'belief in God is understood to be one [discipline] among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.'[132] One would note that, ironically, contemporary secular universities seem to operate in the way of the Medieval university that they criticise—that is, the university is composed by various communities, which are established according to similar individualist intellectual and moral choice in the contemporary century.

The disciplinary inclusiveness of the contemporary university entails another significance. As the secularist moral inclusiveness becomes the outlook of the contemporary university, no particular ethical ideal or choice can be privileged as official. However, the rejection of external coercion should be followed by pursuing a common ethics for the university as unity. As Paul Macdonald remarks, the secularist university aims for 'a purely secular ethics that presumably anybody in the secular university could endorse.'[133] On the one hand, this means every university discipline will be swayed by the common secular ethics insofar as, as noted earlier,

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[131] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 242.
[132] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.
[133] Paul A. Macdonald, *Christian Theology and the Secular University* (London: Routledge, 2017), 34.

the relevant intellectual and moral dimensions are intertwined in the university. On the other hand, every single ethics chosen by individuals serves for the common ethics of the university, which seeks for common good for the citizenry and flourishing life of the university. As such, the common ethics is related to all university disciplines; thus, theological ethics deserves a significant place in the university. Paul Macdonald's syllogism fleshes out this observation: 'theology helps engender knowledge of the Good; knowledge of the Good affords liberal learners the knowledge that they need to promote the common good; therefore, theology also helps engender the knowledge that liberal learners need to promote the common good. As such, it belongs in the secular university.'[134]

Following this train of thought, a Bavinckian theological ethics is operative in bringing Christian theology and dogmatics into contact with other disciplines. This can be clearly seen in Bavinck's description of the human desire for the common ethics.

> There has to be another, higher, absolute standard. People looked for the essence of morality, for what is moral *in se*, independent of society's judgment and moral for all people at all times. There has to be a *principe* for ethics, a supreme *principe*, a comprehensive and all-regulating principle that governs the conduct of all people and at all times. Morality, in other words, is not custom but an idea, something that is not "is" but comes to being, something that has to be concretized in real life. This is the idea of the Good, the ethical ideal, the idea of the truly human, the humane.[135]

Combining Bavinck's assertion with the analysis above, a syllogism can be formulated as follows: (1) Inasmuch as theological ethics is organically related to and the embodiment of dogmatics, and (2) inasmuch as theological ethics cooperates with other types of ethics—which is related to individual citizens of the university and then to every discipline—to develop the common good and flourishing life of the university, (3) therefore Christian theology (dogmatics) implicitly engages with other disciplines by the dissemination of the knowledge of God who is the highest Good.

Recent scholarship lends much support to a Bavinckian view of theological ethics as an operative interdisciplinary point of contact in the contemporary situation. To cite one example. Gerald McKenny's recent article on the biotechnological enhancement of human beings conjoins Christian theological anthropology, biotechnology and ethics. With respect to the former two, he observes that biotechnological enhancement does not belittle the created order, neither does it necessarily instrumentalise human biological nature or devalue the human

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[134] *Ibid.*, 214. Macdonald painstakingly defends the place of theology in the contemporary secular university from the perspective of moral education in chapter five. The notion of common good is crucial for his argument (209-210).

[135] Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, 49; Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics, Vol. 1*, 18-19; rev.

person.[136] Moreover, he points out that 'certain capabilities and states for which our nature in its present form is not adequate' can be regarded as *good* via biotechnological enhancement.[137] By arguing so, biotechnological enhancement is justified morally as well as theologically. In reading McKenny's article, it should be noted how theological anthropology's engagement with biotechnological enhancement finally drives us to make the moral judgment that the enhancement is good and so justified morally. The theologically ethical conclusion may draw others' attention to the contribution that Christian theology can make to the broader discipline of biotechnology.

My analysis and demonstration hitherto have illustrated the Bavinckian meaning of theology's Queenship in terms of morality in the contemporary university. Theological ethics as the embodiment of Christian theology is a working channel via which the knowledge of God and all thing in relation to Him are presented before the other disciplines in the interdisciplinary interaction. As contributing to the construction of the university's common ethics and good, theological ethics reminds university academics of the reality of the ethical ideal, which will deepen and consolidate the value, direction and purpose of every *wetenschap*. By doing so, the catholicity of Christian theology is concretised in the academy; the gospel is the pearl and leaven in the sphere of *wetenschap*.

IV. Concluding Appraisal

As constructing scientific theology in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bavinck spoke routinely of theology's place in the academy with indisputable tone. In those years, Christianity was still dominant, though its influence was declining considerably. Hence, he denied the pre-eminence of the faculty of religious science or religious studies in the Dutch university from a Christian perspective. Such a mode of argumentation seems outdated in the contemporary century.[138] After all, belief in the Christian God is just one option among others. Although the Queen is stubborn, the truth is that she has been dethroned.

However, Bavinck's system is still relevant in the contemporary century. From his theological insights and arguments, I deduce three rationales which are used to articulate a

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[136] Gerald McKenny, "Human Nature and Biotechnological Enhancement: Some Theological Considerations," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (2019): 232-236.
[137] *Ibid.*, 239.
[138] In particular, British universities adopt the way of theology-*and*-religious studies or divinity-*and*-religious studies, which shapes a type of collegiality between the disciplines and students, serving for peaceful conversation between differing religious communities; on further, David F. Ford, "Theology and Religious Studies for a Multifaith and Secular Society," in *Theology and Religious Studies in Higher Education: Global Perspectives*, ed. Darlene L. Bird and Simon G. Smith (London: Continuum, 2009), 31-43.

Bavinckian approach to the practice of theological studies in the contemporary secular university. In the analysis of the three rationales, the foremost point we can learn is the personality of Bavinck qua theologian, which I reckon as the most beneficial to university theologians in the twenty-first century. Through the three rationales as suggested in this chapter, one is impressed that Bavinck is of great confidence in his identity of a *wetenschappelijke* theologian. This confidence hinges upon his faith in the Triune God, which is indispensable to and the object of scientific theology.

Such a personality is heuristic. Contemporary university theologians should remember that theology is the Queen in spite of being defamed. As with Bavinck, they should confidently practise theological studies with a faith commitment to the Triune God. Scientific theology should be first the pearl of the great price and then be the leavening agent in the sphere of science. In so doing, theology does not seek to usurp others' throne that belongs to any other originally. Rather, theology aims for moral and spiritual dominion among university disciplines. In this course, university theologians by no means subordinate theology to the other sciences: 'If God is for us, who is against us?' (Rom. 8:31; NRSV) In the meantime, university theologians should recall Paul's saying as they confidently seek out interdisciplinary engagement: 'For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving.' (1 Tim. 4:4; NRSV)

Conclusion

After James Eglinton's new organic reading of Bavinck's theology, interpreting Bavinck's system as a united whole has become the industry standard of Bavinck studies. This new interpretative paradigm has generated the promise to new studies on Bavinck's theological system. This can be evidenced by Cory Brock's, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto's and Bruce Pass's doctoral theses, which were supervised by Eglinton. Following this new reading, this study holds to a basic hermeneutical principle that Bavinck's theology is a united system. In contrast with the three aforementioned theses, which respectively focus on one particular theme in Bavinck's system, this study seeks for a big-picture understanding of his system. In other words, it attempts to move from the new reading to the meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system through the lens of scientific theology. By doing so, the idea of scientific theology as explained in this study furnishes an apparatus that coordinates various fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's thought.

Granted that organic thinking is an interpretative paradigm, this study has demonstrated thus far that Bavinck's organic language seems not to be the meta-language, which serves to shape the hermeneutical meta-paradigm for understanding Bavinck's system. Rather, it is *wetenschap* (science) which is chosen as the meta-language for two reasons. On the one hand, standing firmly in the Reformed and Calvinistic tradition, which confirms theology as a *scientia*, Bavinck did not ignore the *wetenschappelijke* nature of dogmatics or theology at the outset of his theological career. On the other hand, Bavinck's pervasive use of *wetenschap* to qualify theology further proves that science is eligible to be the meta-language.

To put Bavinck's view of theology as a science in his historical context strengthens the meta-paradigmatic reading insofar as doing such exhibits how Bavinck constructed his system in view of the challenges he confronted in the Netherlands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of various contextual factors, the rise of *religiewetenschap* (religious science) and theological modernism are prominent. The former challenged the scientificity of theology directly, and even attempted to expel theology from the sphere of science—Dutch universities. This historical factor reminds us to watch how Bavinck constructed his particular account of scientific theology to combat those who endorsed the faculty of religious science in Dutch universities. In contrast with the view of religious science that challenged theology externally, theological modernism seems to turn theology upside down internally. That is, it depended on positivism and natural science, to which the Christian faith was made subordinate. This

reminds us to watch how Bavinck upheld the scientificity of theology to rule out the erosion of theological modernism.

In view of the two outstanding contextual factors, Bavinck defines theology as the science of God. This definition hinges upon his notion of twofold *wetenschap*—the visible and the invisible. Inasmuch as God created the spiritual and physical worlds, there must be two kinds of science, the object of which exist in the two worlds respectively. Kristensen remarks well: 'The name "science" includes a greater richness of types than those of which we are generally aware, and the diversity of types is connected with the deepest factors in our spiritual life. Bavinck's science has allowed us to behold this richness with extraordinary lucidity.'[1] The rich connotation of Bavinck's *wetenschap* implies that science must have general definitive elements: the real object, the presupposition in faith, and connection to the object investigated. In parallel, scientific theology has God as the real object, takes assumptions of God's existence and self-revelation in faith, and is bound up with God. This theocentric essence of scientific theology determines its task. Scientific theology is responsible to construct an organic system of dogmas, uses it to serve God's congregation, and finally leads God's people to worship and glorify Himself.

The basic account of Bavinck's scientific theology warrants a detailed explication. In this regard, the thesis attempts to carry out constructive work. That is to say, the five rationales of scientific theology demonstrated in the thesis are not originally spoke of by Bavinck. Rather, they can be deduced from Bavinck's definition of scientific theology and the development of his idea of theology as the *wetenschap* of God since his early career onwards.

As theology takes assumption of God's self-revelation in faith, the first and most salient rationale of the science of God is positive revelationalism—that is, the *objective* revelation of God, which is axiomatic for theology, can be immediately experienced by humans in such a way that it can be appropriated by the human *subjective* believing consciousness (faith); thereby, scientific theology can be developed. It is worth noting that the positive revelationalism is not positivistic, thereby differing from theological modernism and avoiding subordinating scientific theology to the nineteenth-century positivistic science.

The second rationale of scientific theology is theological organicism. In elaborating on this rationale, one is impressed how Bavinck utilises the organic language as secondary to *wetenschap*; as such, *wetenschappelijke* theology as meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system is justified. Having appropriated the fourfold principle of Bavinck's organic thinking,

[1] Kristensen, "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work," 42.

as laid clearly out in *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing* and *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, the thesis showcases the double organic character of scientific theology. The interior organicity indicates that scientific theology is not an aggregate but an organism, being constitutive of interconnected theological *loci*, which is orchestrated organically as a whole by the dogma of the knowledge of God and develops towards the doxological *telos*. The exterior organicity signifies that scientific theology must engage with the other sciences, which underscores the due place of theology in the university. This is a heuristic point that the contemporary university theologian can learn.

The third rationale of scientific theology is organically critical realism. While taking assumption of revelation in faith, Bavinck's system implies *organically* critical realism, that is, that the Logos collaborates with the Spirit to establish the organic correspondence between subjective and objective revelation. The Logos-Spirit model directs one to reckon with organically *critical* realism. That is, the Holy Spirit is the living agent and force that develops the organism of scientific theology towards its end. In this light, scientific theology is both conservative and progressive. The scientific theologian should appropriate the tradition of the Church critically, which proves his or her faith in the continuing work of the Spirit.

The fourth rationale refers to dialectical catholicity. As a catholic theologian, Bavinck defines catholicity as essential to the Church and Christianity. Whilst discussing the catholicity of theology, we need to take a nuanced reading that Bavinck's view of catholicity is dialectical. Bavinck holds fast to his own *Gereformeerde* tradition, rejecting alleged non-committed theological studies. Notwithstanding the theological commitment, he suggests that scientific theologians must be moving outwards and cannot be restricted within the confines of their own traditions. This outward action means that scientific theology not only touches the boundaries of Christian theological world, but also goes beyond the borders of the Christian religion and extends to the end of creation. In short, the dialectical catholicity of scientific theology signifies a centrifugal movement, which has the theologian's own tradition as the centre and spreads out towards the end of creation.

The fifth rationale is doxological teleology. As an organism, scientific theology is developing towards the end with the aid of the continuing work of the Spirit. Bavinck's theocentric essence of scientific theology means that divine glorification is the unique *telos*. By arguing so, the thesis demonstrates that, according to Bavinck, the idiosyncrasy of theology's scientificity is the perichoresis of its intellectual and doxological natures. This means, on the one hand, that scientific theology is indicative of knowing God in praising. On the other hand, this rationale underscores that scientific theology should be practised by the

dogmatician who is in relation to God and receives God's revelation by the believing consciousness.

It should be noted that the five rationales are not discrete. On the contrary, they are in concatenation and make up the *singular* grammar of scientific theology. In turn, this grammar evidences the interpretative meta-paradigm of Bavinck's thought, which coordinates and integrates various fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's system. (Thus, theological organicism is secondary to the idea of *wetenschap* in Bavinck's theology.) That is to say, only with five rationales can one enjoy the whole landscape of Bavinck's scientific theology. Moreover, the five rationales together prove the Trinitarian character and *exitus-reditus* scheme of the grammar. That is, scientific theology is from God, by God, and for God; it is the human work that is contingent upon the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's system through the lens of *wetenschap* is more than to figure out the character of scientific theology. How Bavinck's scientific theology was actually operative in his milieu is worth noting. To put it another way, this study puts forward the meta-paradigmatic reading whereby Bavinck's *wetenschappelijke* theology was and is working in the academy.

Other than the challenge of religious science, Bavinck's concern on theology's place in the university was pertinent to the Kuyper-Lindeboom debates. The antithesis between Kuyper and Lindeboom consisted in that the former maintained the place of theology in the university alone, freeing from the governance of the institutional church, whereas the latter insisted that theological studies should be supervised and governed by the church. Using Christological formula, Kuyper stressed the humanity of theology, whereas Lindeboom highlighted the divinity. By contrast, Bavinck took a middle way by the notions of the sovereignty of science and theological encyclopaedia. According to him, scientific theology should be practised in the university yet not be ruptured from the institutional church since the scientific theologian should commit to the institutional church and a particular tradition. Moreover, Bavinck's reformulation of the Medieval slogan "theology as the *Regina Scientiarum*" explains that scientific theology should exercise its moral and spiritual dominion in the academy. The other sciences are no longer her handmaiden; rather, they are sisters. Both the *via media* and the reimagining of theology's Queenship come down to the emphasis on the ontological importance of the practitioner of scientific theology.

The meta-paradigmatic reading of Bavinck's theology recognises that a Bavinckian account of scientific theology is still relevant in the contemporary secular university. From Bavinck's scientific theology, the thesis again attempts to sum up three principles that are

applicable for contemporary university theologians. First, university theologians should be humble yet courageous. This means that they should hold fast to the God-vision (from God, by God, and for God) and then speak of what the other sciences are incapable of grasping. Meanwhile, university theologians should engage in interdisciplinary interaction and appropriate the findings of the other sciences courageously. Second, the ontological priority of the human agent in the university is of importance to theologians if they are to practise theology in a scientific way. The human agent qua *theologian* indicates that religious confession is indispensable to the intellectual integrity of the university theologian. On the other hand, the human agent qua *academic* signifies how the spiritualised intelligence of the theologian offers an alternative angle from which the academics of other disciplines can learn another epistemological approach to the objects investigated. Third, given the moral character of theology's Queenship, theological ethics can serve as the interdisciplinary point of contact. This is because in Bavinck's system theological ethics is organically related to and the embodiment of dogmatics. Meanwhile, that the contemporary secular university seeks for common ethics and good guarantees the place of theological ethics through which the knowledge of God who is the highest Good is presented before the other disciplines. In short, a Bavinckian account of scientific theology showcases that to be a university theologian, one must practise scientific theology confidently by faith in the Triune God.

The meta-paradigmatic reading, which coordinates and integrates various fundamental characteristics and themes of Bavinck's thought, offered in the thesis can prove two things. First, to read Bavinck's system in terms of *wetenschap* strengthens the new reading and the reality of a united Bavinck (rather than two Bavincks). Like the organic new reading, the meta-paradigmatic reading generates the promise to Bavinck studies ensuing that the tensions within Bavinck's system can be addressed through the lens of the *wetenschappelijke* nature of Bavinck's theology. Second, the meta-paradigmatic reading shows that Bavinck's dogmatics is not merely restricted to Christian doctrines. Rather, Bavinck's scientific theology, which starts from dogmatics, intends to embrace the whole universe and engage with all things, so that it can consecrate what is sanctified to the Triune God. Kristensen thus remarks, 'Many can parrot Bavinck. Few can prove the truth thereof as he did: through a life lived in the service of science.'[2]

This thesis must also recognise, of course, that Bavinck's scientific theology has certain limitations. A significant one is that, as it was constructed in a culture that had historically and

[2] Kristensen, "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work," 49.

deeply been influenced by Christianity, Bavinck's ideal of scientific theology and its place in the university is at variance with the contexts of many contemporary theologians who are undertaking theological studies in atheistic countries. Like theologians in mainland China, many of them practise theology in underground seminaries due to anti-Christian religious policies.[3] However, this does not mean that a Bavinckian account of scientific theology must necessarily be ineffective in those contexts. Rather, more studies need to be undertaken to explore the possible benefits of such an account to those theologians. Hence, I would like to argue alongside Eglinton that this thesis 'has only begun to scratch the surface' of Bavinck's system of scientific theology.[4] Further studies on Bavinck's *wetenschappelijke* theology are warranted. In particular, to deploy the meta-paradigmatic reading to particular *loci* or themes of Bavinck's system would be intriguing. Such inquiries will lay out how Bavinck construes each *locus* in the *wetenschappelijke* way. Then, the five rationales will be deployed specifically. On the other hand, such inquiries will ascertain whether or not the Trinitarian grammar needs be supplemented. What is more, further studies on the fecundity of a Bavinckian view of scientific theology for the contemporary interdisciplinary interaction are demanded as well. How would a Bavinckian account engage in the dialogue between theology and politics? How would such an account deal with theistic evolution? Would it argue for or against the collegiality of theology and religious studies in British universities?

[3] On an attempt to apply Bavinck's theology in Chinese context, see Ximian Xu, "The Scientific Calling of the Church: Herman Bavinck's Exhortation for the Churches in Mainland China," *Studies in World Christianity* (forthcoming, 2021).
[4] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 209.

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